

# Gather

North Idaho

## Our Favorite Hikes

**Plus:**

- **Rich & Kathy: How one couple made a house into a haven**
- **From France to Idaho: one food truck owner's journey**
- **The address mix-up that sparked a roadtrip**

**...and more!**



**What does it mean to  
*Gather?***

**A note from Mark**

**GATHERNORTHIDAHO.COM  
SUMMER 2026**

# Refuge

There's a moment,  
somewhere between the noise of the day  
and the quiet of evening,  
when a house becomes something more.

A place to return.  
A place to gather.  
A place to belong.

That's what we mean by refuge.



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## Setting the Table



**B**efore time began, when there was nothing but God, there was still gathering: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The number one symbol in the Bible is a meal—a gathering—from Abraham preparing a feast for desert wanderers—the angels who prefigured Christ—to Christ Himself at the Last Supper.

I love to visit with other people. My sons are always trying to drag me out to the car as I spend, to them, too much time chatting with people after Mass on a Sunday. Our dining table is regularly filled with friends. I tell my boys that these gatherings—be they for five minutes after Mass (okay, they're closer to twenty) to hours spent over a roast lamb or a pot of my wife Rosie's chili—are the meaning of life. To gather is not just a social habit; it's a sacred act that builds friendships and brings peace.

I love living in North Idaho for that very reason. There's something special about where we live. I see it regularly when I help friends and clients buy their next home. It's not the physical structure, but the people within it, gathering to celebrate milestones and form memories with those they love, that make a home.

Gatherings happen around a table at home or at one of the many great restaurants we have in our area. They happen by or on our beautiful lake or around a campfire in our surrounding wilderness. Our area is small enough that impromptu gatherings even happen while we're out and about: a friend in the produce section at the market or the coffeeshop, another on the Tubbs Hill trail or walking down Sherman Avenue. Not a week goes by that I don't run into someone I know.

These encounters—be they planned or unplanned, be they four hours or four minutes—are what gives our home its warmth and character and it's why I've started Gather, a meeting place in print that is meant to extend beyond these pages to dinners shared, conversations started, and friendships formed. Gather is not just the magazine you hold in your hands. It's true gatherings, in person and real, a type of reality we all yearn for.

Enjoy the articles I've curated in the following pages: profiles of restaurants, local hikes, and, most importantly, the people who make it all possible—from the small business owners and artists to the families and friends that make our town a community. Then, go beyond. Call that friend you haven't seen in a while or attend that meeting you've been meaning to check out. The table is set. Come gather!



*Mark Griswold*  
Host, Gather North Idaho

# Gather

North Idaho

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*“Spread love everywhere you go. Let no one ever come to you without leaving happier.”*

— ST. MOTHER TERESA OF CALCUTTA

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Gather is a quarterly lifestyle magazine celebrating the people, places, and traditions of North Idaho and is published by Refuge Properties North Idaho. If you enjoy this magazine, the greatest compliment you can give is to share it with a friend—or refer someone looking to find their refuge here in North Idaho.

The views and opinions expressed by contributors are their own and do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher.

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*Lake Coeur d’Alene from Higgins Point*

# From Our Neighbors

*A place for readers to share stories, reflections, and letters with the community.*

*A community grows stronger when neighbors share their stories and we'd love to hear from you!*

For our Fall issue, send us a letter responding to something you enjoyed or found meaningful in this issue of *Gather*.

You could also answer one of these questions:

- What is your favorite North Idaho fall tradition, and why?
- What place in North Idaho feels most like home to you when autumn arrives?

Submit your response by July 31 to [markgriswold208@gmail.com](mailto:markgriswold208@gmail.com) and include your name and hometown. Selected letters will appear in our Fall issue. Letters may be edited for length and clarity.



# Community Calendar

## Ongoing

### Kootenai County Farmers Markets

Saturdays, 9am-1:30pm, through October  
*Hwy 95 & Prairie*

Wednesdays, 4-7pm, through September  
*Riverstone*

[kootenaifarmersmarkets.org](http://kootenaifarmersmarkets.org)

### CDA Flea Market

2nd & Last Sunday, 10am-3pm, through September

*Museum of North Idaho*  
[cdaflea.com](http://cdaflea.com)

### ArtWalk

2nd Friday, 5-8pm, year around

*Downtown CDA*  
[artsandculturecda.org](http://artsandculturecda.org)

### Keop Concerts in the Park

Sundays, 1-4pm - *CDA City Park*

Wednesdays, 5:30-8:30pm - *McEuen Park*

Thursdays, 6-8:30pm - *McIntire Family Park*

Full schedule at [keopconcerts.com](http://keopconcerts.com)

## June

### Car d'Lane Classic Car Weekend

Cruise - Friday, June 19th, 6-8:30pm

Show - Saturday, June 20th, 8am-4pm

*Sherman Ave*

### Ironman 70.3



Sunday, June 21st, 6am

Swimming and marathon sections start at City Park.

[ironman.com/races/im703-coeur-dalene](http://ironman.com/races/im703-coeur-dalene)



Find more events at  
[GatherNorthIdaho.com](http://GatherNorthIdaho.com)

## July

### Independence Day 250 Celebrations

**Kiddie Parade** - July 3rd, 10-11am

**American Heroes Parade** - July 4th, 10am-noon

**Fireworks** - 9:45pm

*Sherman Ave/Lake Coeur d'Alene*



### Post Falls Festival

Friday, July 10th-Sunday, July 12th

*Q'emiln Park*

[postfalls.gov](http://postfalls.gov)

### Brewfest

Saturday, July 11th, 1-7pm

*McEuen Park*

Sample craft beers and ciders and enjoy live music.

### Rathdrum Days

Friday, July 17th-Saturday, July 18th

*Majestic Park*

[rathdrumchamber.com](http://rathdrumchamber.com)

### Hayden Days

Friday, July 24th-Saturday July 14th

*McIntire Family Park*

[haydenid.gov](http://haydenid.gov)

### Downtown Street Fair/

### Art on the Green

July 31st-Aug 1st, 10am-8pm/Aug 2nd, 10am-5pm

*Sherman Ave/NIC Campus.*

[cdadowntown.com](http://cdadowntown.com)

[artonthegreencda.com](http://artonthegreencda.com)

## August

### North Idaho State Fair

Aug 21st-30th

*Kootenai County Fairgrounds*

[nisfair.fun](http://nisfair.fun)





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### Sunday Morning Sunday Evening

By Mark Griswold

Back when I was a child, before heading off to church, I'd wake up on Sunday mornings to a hearty breakfast and the comforting tones of Charles Kuralt—and later Charles Osgood—hosting *CBS Sunday Morning*. *Sunday Morning* was a 90-minute news feature program that was mostly what we may call “fluff” pieces—stories that didn't divide and conquer like so many do today. No gotcha journalism, just profiles on art, culture, and interesting personalities from New York to Kansas and everywhere in between.

I'm sure I'm reflecting on it all through rose-colored glasses, but it's a fond memory and one I was reminded of this evening.

Today was a different kind of “Sunday Morning.” Our garage door wouldn't open, which meant we were unable to make it to Mass. But the Lord has a way of reaching us where we're at and that serendipity can be wonderful.

After fiddling with it on my own for a bit, I reached for

the only failsafe tool in my arsenal, the phone, and dialed the garage door company. Thankfully, they were open on a Sunday and told me a technician would be by between 4 and 6pm. Unfortunately, that meant we weren't able to make it to evening Mass either, but again, the Lord has a way of reaching us where we're at.

At around 5, Gabe showed up. With his long greying reddish hair pulled back into a ponytail and a pair of glasses, he did not fit the stereotype of your typical repairman. When he approached the door, something about his manner struck me, like we'd been friends for years, he a neighbor trotting over to fix my garage door.

But the wonderful oddity didn't stop there. No, Gabe was that rare renaissance man who comes to perform a manual task only to reveal a penchant for quoting the modern classics and waxing profound.

Sure, it started off technically enough when he mentioned the average garage door gets used four times per day, to which I admitted that, with three kids, we used it more frequently than most as it was often our “front door.”

“These days, front doors are only for guests and Jehovah's Witnesses,” Gabe bemoaned as we stood in my garage, then followed up with something about the slow death of community.

“That reminds me of something Orwell once wrote. Or was it Bradbury. Yes, *Fahrenheit 451*. The lack of front porches,” I replied.

*“No front porches. My uncle says there used to be front porches. And people sat there sometimes at night, talking when they wanted to talk, rocking, and not talking when they didn’t want to talk. Sometimes they just sat there and thought about things, turned things over. My uncle says the architects got rid of the front porches because they didn’t look well. But my uncle says that was merely rationalizing it; the real reason, hidden underneath, might be they didn’t want people sitting like that, doing nothing, rocking, talking; that was the wrong KIND of social life. People talked too much. And they had time to think. So they ran off with the porches.”*

— RAY BRADBURY, *FAHRENHEIT 451*

At that, what started out as a minor home repair turned into a philosophy discussion, two bibliophiles discussing not just the torque force of the springs on my PDS 370, but the latest books we were reading, the excitement and trepidation of fatherhood, Hemingway, poetic versus terse prose, newspaper editors (we both wrote for the student newspaper in college) and heavy metal music.

This was what front porches were made for and this moment, although it was a Sunday evening, reminded me of the kinds of human-interest stories that used to air on Sunday Morning. As I read the first draft of this reflection to my wife, I couldn’t help but hear the comforting tones of Charles Kuralt echoing in my head. A Postcard from North Idaho, as it were.



We didn’t make it to Mass this evening, but the fellowship Gabe and I shared was a small glimpse of the divine in the everyday. He shared with me that he and his wife were expecting their first child and how excited and maybe a little trepidatious he was. I shared with him a few insights from my fatherhood. The conversation was intermixed with garage door maintenance tips and the philosophy of leaving a lasting impact on the world. It was the type of spontaneous conversation that two strangers become

friends, if even for a moment, were meant to have on a cool Sunday evening, the faint glow of the sun as it faded behind a row of ticky-tacky houses shedding a dim light on a bright conversation.

Gabe fixed my garage door and though I was close to a thousand dollars lighter in my bank account, the real value of the evening couldn’t be measured in money or even foot-pounds, but in the rhyme and meter of the discourse.

This was a moment that could never be shared over social media or created by AI. This was humanity in its finest and its simplest. The meaning of life isn’t often revealed in some temple atop a mountain far away or in a leather-bound book found tucked away in the back shelves of an old library. The important moments for the vast majority of us are rarely the ones that will lead the nightly news or get their own chapter in a history book. The moments that form the core of our souls, the ones that are true in the truly philosophical notion of that word, are the ones that are more likely to have been profiled on Sunday Morning, not Tuesday evening, the ones that happen not on an international stage, but in a garage on a quiet street in a small town.

After I paid my bill, this renaissance man, this writer turned handyman turned sage, piled back into his truck and drove off as the last hints of dusk faded into darkness. A day that had started with a dark cloud of needed home repair had revealed the silver lining of a human interaction and, ironically and with a nod to Ray Bradbury, something that can happen not just on a front porch, but in a garage.

Godspeed, my friend, and I hope to catch you on the front porch of life again one day.



*It could have been home  
but for the hedgerows and ancient stone.  
Still, I knew this place.  
Its rhythms. Its rapport. Its roads.  
Five thousand miles,  
yet not so far.  
The bread. The wine.  
The quiet hymn of the wind  
as it played upon hydrangeas.*



*Les Hortensias*  
BRITTANY

# Strawberry Turkey Explosion

*A loaded chopped salad of small-cut greens, strawberries, turkey, turnips, and chive blossoms, dressed in aged balsamic and good olive oil.*

Just chop the amounts that feel right. The turnips, the strawberries, the cucumbers, we're not measuring. Just take it easy with the vinaigrette and salt and mix to taste.

## The greens

This salad starts with a bag of spring mix, which is three kinds of Salanova lettuce along with mustard, kale, and spinach, plus another bag of arugula. Both bags go on a cutting board and get diced up real small, so you don't have to have giant bites of lettuce. You want consistent, even bites that go with the protein. We chopped a small head of romaine into it as well.

- 1 bag spring mix (three kinds of Salanova lettuce, plus mustard, kale, and spinach)
- 1 bag arugula
- 1 small head romaine

## The turkey, fruit & veg

The protein here is sliced turkey, the sandwich-meat kind. Then strawberries, onions, turnips, and cucumbers, all sliced bite-sized. A child should be able to find all of this stuff bite-sized. Snap peas go in too, diced up.

- Sliced turkey (sandwich meat)
- Strawberries, sliced bite-sized
- Onions, sliced
- Salad turnips, sliced
- Cucumbers, sliced
- Snap peas, diced

Everything laid out before the toss, with nutritional yeast and pepper over the top.

## Dress & top

For the dressing we used aged balsamic vinegar and olive oil (the Trader Giotto's that's produced in Italy and Spain), plus salt, pepper, and nutritional yeast. Then the chive blossoms, about five of them. They look big, but at the point you toss it, break them up into smaller pieces. Nobody wants a whole mouthful of chive blossom.

- Aged balsamic vinegar
- Olive oil
- Salt and pepper
- Nutritional yeast
- About 5 chive blossoms, broken into smaller pieces

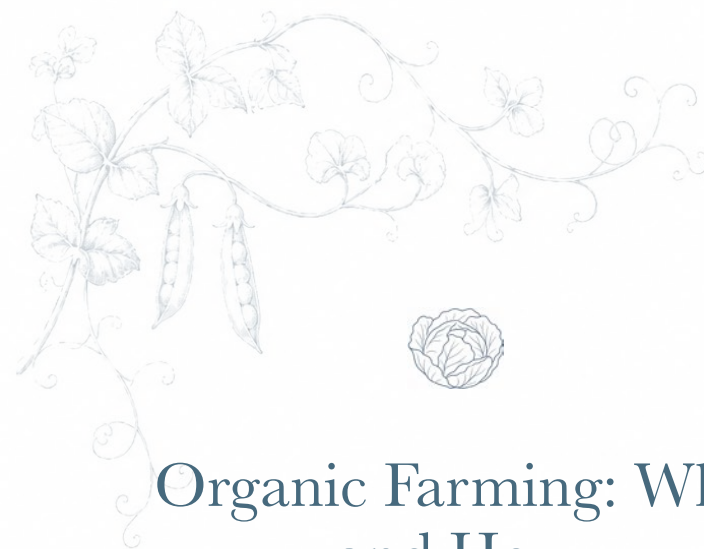
## Toss it

Put it all in a big bowl and toss. Go easy on the balsamic and the salt, those are the only two things you can really overdo, and mix to taste.

*Many of the fresh fruits and vegetables are available when you subscribe to a CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) bag from McKerracher Family Farm, located in Athol. Order online at McKerracherFamilyFarm.com.*



Gather North Idaho - Summer 2026



# Organic Farming: Why and How

By David McKerracher

**M**y primary source of income is online, but my day-to-day is helping out on our family farm in northern Idaho. The farm is 2.5 acres, certified organic, a regenerative micro market-garden. My mom Julie is the master gardener and certified organic market farmer. My dad Kerry built everything that stands on our property. My parents sacrificed everything for this way of life and it's only just beginning to come to fruition, a

true blessing for future generations.

What I love about homesteading is that it cuts against the grain of how most of us were taught to live. Modern life pushes us into one narrow specialization and outsources everything else to strangers you will never meet. The farm gives the opposite. We see the work from seed to plate. We feed our family and our neighbors.

This work is fulfilling in a way that a job description cannot capture. I don't work the farm because it pays — for me it literally does not. I volunteer daily because it's the kind of work that grounds me. Too much time spent on screens for internet work makes me feel gross.



Gather North Idaho - Summer 2026

*"We see the work from seed to plate.*

*We feed our family and our neighbors."*



If that sounds relatable, and you want to get started, here are some tips:

1. Start smaller than you think. A single tomato plant in a 5-gallon bucket, or one raised bed worked well beats a half-acre that becomes a weed patch by July. I started with learning how to grow microgreens because they have a short life-cycle, quick turn-around time, taste delicious and are nutrient-dense.
2. Build the soil before you plant the crop. Crops should function as a mechanism of soil maintenance. Our job as growers is first and foremost the stewardship of soil. Compost, cover crops, and patience produce more food than fertilizer ever will.
3. If you cannot grow your own yet, find the farmers near you and buy from them directly. Show up at the farmers' market when it is cold and there are only three vendors there. Get on a CSA list so you can receive fresh produce from your local growers on a regular basis (ours is year-round!). The people growing real food in your area are doing one of the most important jobs around, and we depend on loyal customers.
4. If you have a smartphone and preferred platforms for content, then follow gardeners and farmers who do regenerative work. Watch documentaries. Read books. Whatever your preferred media formats are, you should surround yourself with iconic sources of inspiration and knowledge — Wendell Berry, Joel Salatin, Curtis Stone, Jean-Martin Fortier, or if you're local, my mom Julie McKerracher!

I'll close on that note: Come get a tour from my mom. If you want to visit us at McKerracher Family Farm, we have monthly farm-to-table events during the summer time, hanging flower pot creation parties in the spring, and volunteer days throughout the year available if you reach out to us.

Find McKerracher Family Farm online at [McKerracherFamilyFarm.com](http://McKerracherFamilyFarm.com)



David and Ann McKerracher share produce from McKerracher Family Farm at a North Idaho farmers market.



David tending to the chickens with newborn son, Julian.



## CARPE DIEM CREPES: A TASTE OF BRITTANY IN NORTH IDAHO

BY MARK GRISWOLD  
WITH CARINNE CAMPBELL

I've had a love affair with French culture since I was a teenager. The first time I tasted a crêpe was at a small stand in Seattle's Pike Place Market, and I was immediately enamored with this wonderfully simple dish that could be enjoyed savory or sweet—elegant without trying to be elegant.

So I was delighted a few years ago when I happened upon Carinne and her Carpe Diem Crêpes food truck at a local farmers market. Since then, she has catered several of my events, and what began as admiration for the food gradually turned into friendship.

And then came the detail that made the whole thing feel strangely providential: Carinne is from Brittany, France—the historic region most associated with crêpes and savory galettes, a place that has long occupied a romantic corner of my imagination.

For Carinne, however, Brittany is not an abstraction or a postcard image. It is home.

"I've dreamed of opening my own business since I was 12 years old," she told me. "I always imagined creating something centered around French crêpes, inspired by a family recipe passed down from my grandmother."

That dream eventually crossed an ocean.



Though she spent years working in finance, the desire to build something more personal never faded. In 2021, she finally took the leap and launched Carpe Diem



Carrine preparing traditional French crêpes from inside the Carpe Diem Crêpes trailer.

“My sweet and savory crêpes are intentionally simple, just like in France,” she said. “I’ve always stayed faithful to the original recipes I grew up with, keeping that genuine connection to my roots.”

That simplicity is part of the charm. The ingredients are familiar — eggs, cheese, ham, fruit, Nutella, jams, cream — but the experience feels unhurried and deeply human in a way modern food culture often forgets.

*“That’s the magic of food — it carries memories.”*

There is also something surprisingly universal about crêpes.

Nearly every culture seems to have its own variation: Russian blini, Indian dosa, Swedish pannkakor, Polish naleśniki. Different names, different histories, but the same basic instinct — humble ingredients transformed into something comforting and communal.

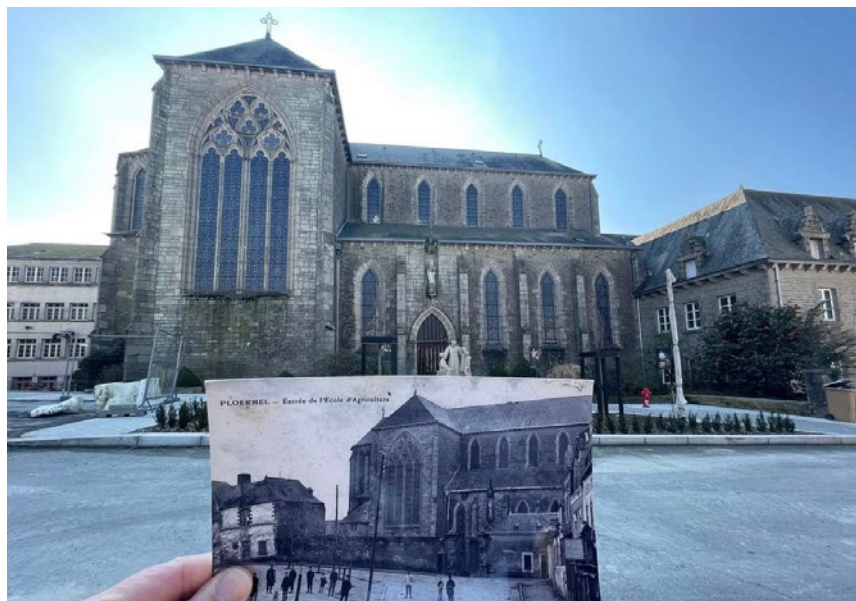
“One of my favorite things,” Carinne shared, “is hearing customers say, ‘This reminds me of how we made them back home.’ That’s the

Crêpes. Their first event took place in October of that year. Since then, the business has steadily grown through farmers markets, festivals, catering events, and word-of-mouth across North Idaho.

But what makes Carpe Diem feel distinct is not merely the food itself. It is the intentional commitment to authenticity.

In Brittany, savory crêpes — known as galettes — are traditionally made with buckwheat flour rather than white flour. The result is entirely different from the soft dessert crêpes many Americans first encounter. A true galette develops a lightly crisp exterior while remaining tender inside, giving it a rustic texture and earthy flavor that pairs beautifully with savory fillings.

Carinne imports her buckwheat flour directly from France and stays faithful to the recipes she grew up with.



Saint-Armel Church in Ploërmel, Brittany, where Carinne spent her childhood.

magic of food — it carries memories.”

That idea lingered with me long after our conversation ended.

In a world increasingly dominated by chains, trends, and manufactured experiences, there is something refreshing about meeting someone quietly preserving a family tradition thousands of miles from where it began.

Perhaps that is why people are drawn to Carpe Diem Crêpes. Yes, the food is excellent. But more than that, there is a sense that what you are tasting has roots.

And roots, like recipes, have a way of bringing people together.

Find Carpe Diem Crêpes at one of the many local farmers markets or online at [CarpeDiemCrepes.com](http://CarpeDiemCrepes.com).



Carpe Diem’s fun logo features the iconic Citroën 2CV.



A sweet crêpe made from wheat flour.

*SWEET CRÊPES  
VS.  
SAVORY GALETTES*

In Brittany, savory crêpes are traditionally known as galettes and made with buckwheat flour rather than white flour. The result is a lightly crisp exterior with a rustic, earthy flavor that pairs beautifully with savory fillings like egg, cheese, ham, and vegetables.

Dessert crêpes, by contrast, are typically made with wheat flour, giving them a softer texture suited to sweet fillings such as fruit, chocolate, cream, and jams.

Though many modern variations exist, traditional Breton galettes remain deeply tied to the region’s culinary heritage—simple ingredients transformed through technique, patience, and ritual.



A savory galette made from buckwheat flour.



## Where Clay Meets Conversation:

The Arts & Culture Experience  
By Emily Fishback

In a world increasingly shaped by speed, screens, and scattered attention, people are quietly searching for something older, slower, and harder to quantify: connection. Not the transactional kind of networking that fills conference rooms and LinkedIn feeds, but something more tactile—shared experience, creative risk, and the kind of conversation that lingers long after the chairs are stacked.

That impulse is what sparked the Arts & Culture Experience at The Den coworking space in downtown Coeur d'Alene.

Tucked inside a hub better known for entrepreneurs, tech enthusiasts, gamers, and big-idea builders under the Build\_Club umbrella, the event might, at first glance, seem like an outlier. But in practice, it feels like a natural extension of the ecosystem: a place where people who build things are invited to build something different.

This time, with clay.

The evening's guest was Abby Mulder of THRW Pottery Studio, who arrived not just to demonstrate technique, but to translate a craft. She introduced the group to the fundamentals of hand-building and demonstrated how to create a press pot, grounding the room in a shared starting point.

Then came the assignment: make a heart pot.

There were eleven participants. Not one of them followed the instructions as intended.

And yet, somehow, that was the success story.

Instead of uniform heart-shaped vessels, the room filled with interpretations—unexpected, unfiltered, and deeply personal. One participant sculpted an ornate skull, intricate and deliberate. Another created seals resting on rocks,

## Arts & Culture

a miniature scene that no one else would have come up with.

What emerged wasn't a room of failed instructions—it was a room of divergent thinking made visible.

Far from being discouraged, both the event facilitators and Abby Mulder embraced the outcome. If anything, it affirmed the premise behind the gathering: that art is not compliance, but exploration. Not replication, but revelation.

*Not one of them followed the instructions as intended. And yet, somehow, that was the success story.*

In that sense, the “heart pot” exercise became something else entirely. It wasn't about producing a specific object—it was about revealing how differently each person interprets a shared prompt. In a room full of entrepreneurs and builders, that distinction matters. These are people accustomed to iteration, experimentation, and bending constraints into opportunity. Clay, it turns out, is just another system to test.

And perhaps that is what makes the Arts & Culture Experience unusual among networking events. There are no elevator pitches. No name tags optimized for recall. Instead, there is focus, laughter, accidental sculpture, and the quiet surprise of seeing how someone else thinks when given the same material.

It's more than art, it's the creative human experience.

*The Arts & Culture Experience happens every 2nd Wednesday at the Innovation Den. Visit [innovationcollective.co](http://innovationcollective.co) for upcoming events.*



Abby Mulder welcomes novices and experts alike to THRW Pottery Studio in Coeur d'Alene.



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## Garlic and Grace

By Mark Griswold  
with Chris & Ida Ampongan

The meal begins, as many good meals do, with garlic. Lots of garlic.

“If you haven’t had a branzino,” Chris says from behind the grill, “it’s normally known as a Mediterranean sea bass. It’s really, really good. Nice flaky white fish, really mild flavors to it. And all it needs is Italian parsley, fresh oregano, thyme, and lemon.

“And all the garlic you want to scare vampires away,” Ida adds.

They laugh while Chris tends the grill, smoke curling upward through the backyard, and Ida works nearby in the kitchen assembling toppings for street tacos. On the counter sit blistered tomatoes softened in olive oil and garlic until sweet and earthy. A bottle of Portuguese red wine is opened and glasses filled. Tortillas warm on the stove. Plates are filled.

### The Spiritual Pull

Before anyone eats, we pause to pray.

For Chris and Ida, food is never merely food. It is memory, hospitality, culture, faith, and family all gathered together in one place.

*“For Filipinos, food brings people together.”*

“For Filipinos,” Ida says, “food brings people together.” That philosophy fills nearly every corner of their Post Falls home. The kitchen opens naturally into the dining

space. Conversation lingers. Nothing feels staged or overly formal. Their style of entertaining is warm rather than performative — intimate dinners with close friends, shared bottles of wine, stories, and dishes prepared not to impress but to welcome.

“Keep it simple,” Chris says. “Just serve the best thing that you know how to make.”

The couple moved to North Idaho last year after



nearly three decades in the Seattle area. Though they considered places across the country — Florida, Arizona, Texas, Nebraska — North Idaho kept drawing them back.

*“Keep it simple. Just serve the best thing that you know how to make.”*

Part of that pull was spiritual.

Their Catholic faith played a central role in the decision to move, particularly the presence of St. Joan of Arc parish in Post Falls, close enough to their new home they can walk. Of course, Chris regularly logs nine miles so just about anything is close enough to walk, but this is just a few blocks.

Long connected to the traditional Catholic world, they already knew of the parish years before they imagined leaving Washington.

But faith, for them, is not something compartmentalized away from daily life. It appears naturally throughout an evening in their home — in the statues of the Blessed Virgin Mary and crucifixes on the walls, blessing before dinner and conversations about hospitality, in the importance they place on community and even in the meals themselves.

“Our priest always mentions that the number one symbol in the Bible is a meal,” I say. “The Gospel of Luke is basically the story of Jesus in eleven meals.”

The connection feels especially fitting in a home where so much of life revolves around the table.

### Manila

The couple met in Manila in 1988 at a family gathering. Chris had been invited by Ida’s sister-in-law to help make coffee for the party.

“He was just the hired help,” Ida jokes.

“Not hired,” Chris quickly clarifies with a laugh.



Faith quietly shapes the rhythms of the home.



Ida prepares Mediterranean sea bass before dinner.



Dinner comes together slowly over wine and conversation.

More than thirty years later, the story still gets retold around dinner tables.

Both grew up around cooking, though in very different ways. Ida learned from family. Chris learned from the maids — help is common in The Philippines — and taught himself through books, experimentation, and curiosity.

“What was the first thing you learned to cook?” I ask.

“Pancakes,” Chris answers immediately.

“Oatmeal,” Ida says.

“Oatmeal?” I say, a bit surprised at such an uncharacteristically Filipino dish.

*“He was just the hired help,” Ida jokes.*

*“Not hired,” Chris quickly clarifies with a laugh.*

“It wasn’t instant!” she laughs.

From there, the conversation naturally drifts into Filipino comfort foods: adobo simmered in vinegar and soy sauce, tamarind-based stews rich with pork belly and tropical vegetables, meals built around rice and shared family tables. The food itself reflects centuries of layered influence — Filipino, Spanish, Chinese, and American traditions all quietly woven together.

That same blending of influences now appears in the meals they prepare in Idaho.

One course might include Mediterranean sea bass tucked into street tacos. Another might feature Argentinian-style chimichurri spooned over tri-tip steak and grilled peppers charred over open flame.

At one point Ida carefully cuts into the fish and pulls free the roe sac hidden near the head cavity.

“This,” she announces proudly, “is so flavorful.”

Then, with the enthusiasm of someone genuinely delighted to share a favorite discovery: “Taste it.”

The entire afternoon carries that same spirit.

And perhaps that spirit comes partly from having built a life across many different worlds. Chris spent years in military service before later working in government in Washington. Ida built a life centered around home, family, hospitality, and community. Together they experienced the rapid changes of Seattle over nearly three decades before finally deciding it was time for somewhere quieter.

North Idaho, they say, immediately felt different.

“People are very approachable,” Chris says. “It doesn’t take much.”

Within only a few weeks of arriving, the area already felt like home.

Today, retired life moves at a slower pace. They walk

through the neighborhood nearly every day. They know their neighbors. They attend Mass regularly. Friends stop by for dinner. Summer evenings stretch longer than expected over another glass of wine and another story.

### Vespers and Vespas

And, when the weather cooperates, Chris pulls his Vespa from the garage.



*“Simple ingredients, cooked slowly and shared generously.”*

He has been riding motorcycles for decades, but the vintage-style Vespa parked outside somehow feels perfectly suited to this season of life — relaxed, unhurried, slightly European in spirit.

“This is the most comfortable one I’ve ever had,” he says.

He rides it whenever he can.

The same appreciation for slower rhythms seems to shape nearly everything about the life they’ve built here. Nothing feels rushed. Meals are meant to be lingered over. Guests are encouraged to stay awhile. Even cooking itself becomes less chore than ritual.

While tending steaks on the grill, Chris explains the importance of searing meat properly.

“The searing actually seals the surface,” he says. “So it seals the liquid inside the meats and the fish so it can self-cook itself inside.”

“How long for a good medium rare steak?” I ask.

“One and a half minutes,” he replies confidently. “Then flip it.”

There is expertise there, certainly, but no pretension.

That may ultimately be the defining quality of their home.

For all the carefully prepared meals, the wine pairings, the grilling techniques, and the beautiful presentation, nothing about an evening with Chris and Ida feels exclusive. Guests are not there to admire the hosts. They are there to participate — to pass plates, tell stories, taste something new, and become part of the gathering itself.

### Communion

In many ways, that spirit reflects both their Filipino heritage and their Catholic faith: the belief that meals

matter because people matter.

Not simply as entertainment, but as communion.

As the afternoon winds down and the final glasses empty, conversation eventually turns toward North Idaho itself — the quiet neighborhoods, the friendliness of strangers downtown, the slower pace of life, the feeling of safety and stability they had long been searching for.

For Chris and Ida, moving here was never only about finding a house. It was about finding a place where this kind of life was still possible.



Chris prepares for a ride around town on his Vespa on a sunny day. If you don't see him riding, you may just meet him walking along the Centennial Trail!

## The Intentional Host:

Small details make big memories

By Mark Griswold



Those who know me know I love entertaining. My idea of heaven is a dinner party, which is appropriate since one way Heaven is described in Scripture is as a feast: all the saints and angels glorifying God for eternity around the heavenly banquet. How amazing that will be!

Here on Earth, we make do with less, but a good gathering—whether a few friends over coffee or a fête for a hundred—brings people together. As Christ tells us, “Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.”

Good gatherings begin with intentionality, something that has increasingly gone by the wayside. I get it. Throwing an event takes effort not just for the host but for the guests. It's easier to stay home in a Snuggie and binge-watch *Bridgerton* than attend a *Bridgerton*-themed

party. But real life is richer than experiencing it through someone else's story.

Good events also follow a certain order, a liturgy of sorts. They may not be sacramental in the strict sense, but beauty, ritual, and hospitality matter. Thoughtful preparation communicates love. A properly laid place setting, a handwritten invitation, a jacket and tie or dress and heels—these things tell people they are worth the effort. Admit it: part of you secretly pines for the days of Lawrence Welk, a roast in the oven, and a Jell-O mold in the Frigidaire.

A gathering doesn't need to be elaborate to be memorable. It simply needs a sense of purpose.

As a writer, I'm constantly thinking about atmosphere. What does a room sound like? What does it smell like? What details make it come alive? Hosting works much the same way. When planning your next event, ask yourself:

What story am I trying to tell?

Several years ago, I hosted a radio show with two friends called The Political Bistro. While we occasionally discussed politics, we more often talked about culture, food, music, literature, and travel. Each episode revolved around a theme. If the topic was Brazil, the bumper music was Brazilian, the food was Brazilian, and I'd sprinkle interesting facts about Brazil throughout the show. The details reinforced one another and helped create an atmosphere.

More recently, I hosted a dinner party for eight. I've found eight to be the ideal number for a slightly formal dinner: enough voices for lively conversation but few enough that everyone remains part of the same discussion. For this gathering, I chose a Sicilian theme. I'd recently received a few bottles of my favorite varietal, Sicilian Nero d'Avola, from my favorite winery, Bartholomew Winery in Kennewick, Washington.

With the theme established, the rest followed naturally. I planned a menu of pistachio-encrusted leg of lamb and sautéed eggplant. Guests brought salad and dessert. I created a playlist of Sicilian music and even used the occasion as an excuse to compose a Sicilian song of my own.

The guest list was equally intentional. Rosie and I are blessed with many good friends, so I thought carefully about who might enjoy one another's company. Once gathered, I shared a few details to spark conversation: one couple had just returned from a holiday in Croatia, another guest had grown up in nearby Serbia, and yet another was deep in theological study. The conversation flowed as freely as the wine. Four hours passed effortlessly, punctuated by homemade tiramisu, laughter, and the extra twenty minutes everyone spent lingering at the door before saying goodbye. One guest raved about the lamb for the next two weeks.

Now, not every gathering needs to be this elaborate. Hamburgers and s'mores by the river can be just as rewarding. The point isn't extravagance. The point is intention.

Don't wait to be invited. Pick up the phone and plan the next get-together, whether it's a board game night, coffee with friends, or a fiftieth anniversary celebration for two hundred of your closest companions.

*Courtesy Corner:*  
*Practical Etiquette for Modern Gatherings*

*Hosts*

*Create a theme. It doesn't need to be complicated, but a little cohesiveness in the food, music, or décor will be noticed and appreciated.*

*Make thoughtful introductions. Give people an interesting detail they can connect over.*

*Don't apologize. Your guests won't notice the imperfections nearly as much as you do.*

*Draw others into conversation. Some people simply need an invitation to join in.*

*End graciously. A warm farewell is often remembered longer than an extra hour of small talk.*

*Guests*

*Arrive on time. Don't arrive early, and don't arrive so late that everyone is waiting on you.*

*Bring something small. A loaf of bread, flowers, or a bottle of wine communicates gratitude.*

*Offer help, then read the room. Ask once. If the host declines, enjoy the gathering.*

*Participate. Conversation is a shared responsibility.*

*Put your phone away.*



## Coming Home:

How one couple transformed  
a home into a haven  
By Mark Griswold

When you pull up to Rich and Kathy Morse's home in Hayden Lake, the first thing that strikes you is the nautical theme. The mailbox is held up by a weathered iron cutout of a sailboat. A compass rose adorns the front of the house. Artwork depicting anchors, fishnets, and crabs hang on the many of the outside walls.

It's a little bit of their old life in Western Washington, summers spent sailing through the San Juans, that they brought with them here to North Idaho when they moved in 2018.

It was a move they weren't planning on making, at least not so soon. The longtime Seattle residents had come to Coeur d'Alene for a Memorial Day weekend visit. Kathy

was attending a nursing conference. Rich was curious about a city that kept appearing on lists of the best places to retire. They wanted to explore possibilities for the future—perhaps a place to settle someday after retirement.

"We were just getting the lay of the land," Rich recalls.

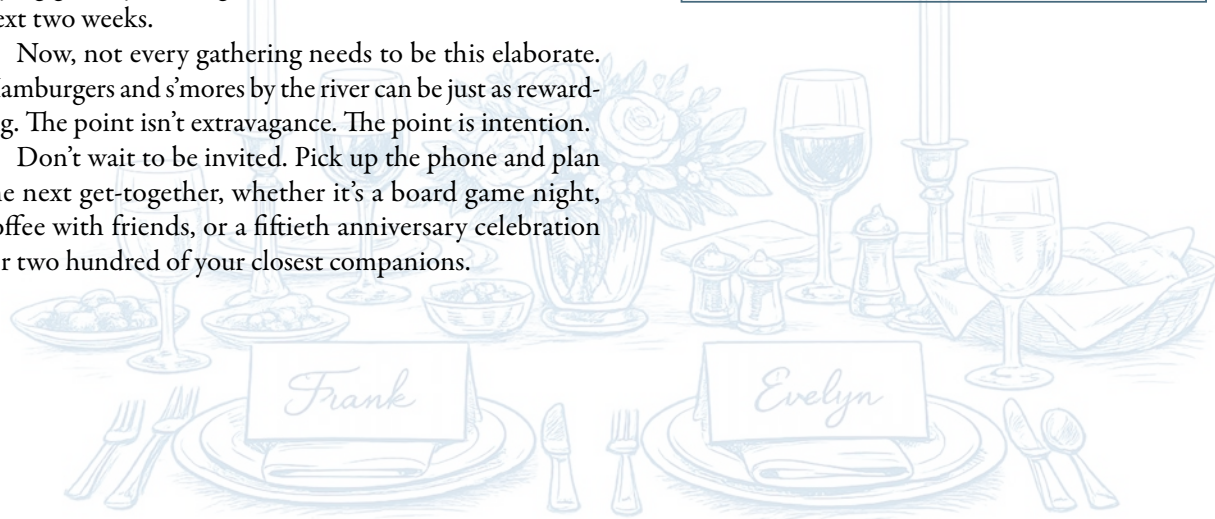
At the time, the couple had spent decades building their lives in Seattle. Both were third-generation Seattleites. Their sons represented the fourth generation of a family deeply rooted in the Pacific Northwest.

Seattle had been good to them. Rich grew up skiing the Cascades, visiting Mount Rainier, and exploring the San Juan Islands. For most of his life, he assumed he would never leave.

But over time, they found themselves looking elsewhere. They wanted to remain in the Northwest, stay within a day's drive of family, and find a community that felt more aligned with the life they hoped to build in retirement.

"I needed to get across the state line," Rich says with a laugh.

Through a real estate connection, they arranged to meet a local agent who spent a day showing them homes around the area. Most were simply examples—places that might help them understand the market and the different parts of Coeur d'Alene.



*The expansive outdoor living spaces feel less like formal landscaping and more like invitations to linger. Rich refers to them as “piazzas,” inspired by travels through Italy.*

*The backyard also features a large lawn perfect for games of croquet, a firepit, and pool.*



*“Sometimes God says now.”*

Then a photograph appeared on the screen.

It was a modern home unlike anything else they had seen that weekend.

Rich immediately sat forward.

“If we could get that house,” he remembers thinking, “I’d move.”

Kathy wasn’t so sure.

“I don’t like modern homes,” she says, laughing.

But the house stayed with them.

Set on nearly an acre, the property offered something unusual for North Idaho: a large swimming pool, expansive outdoor spaces, and a design that felt both distinctive and inviting. Rich began imagining it as more than a home. It could become a destination—a place where family and friends would gather for holidays, summer vacations, and weekends away.

The idea took hold quickly.



Driving home through Eastern Washington, the couple found themselves discussing the possibility more seriously than either had expected.

By the time they reached Moses Lake, the conversation had changed.

“Sometimes God says now,” Rich told Kathy.

A few minutes later, they made a decision.

They would buy the house.

Within days they had submitted a full-price offer. Their Seattle home was listed almost immediately.

The move happened that October.

What followed was not exactly the easy transition many people imagine when they purchase a dream home.

The house had good bones. Built in the late 1980s, it had been considered state-of-the-art in its day. But years of deferred maintenance meant there was plenty of work waiting for its new owners.

### A Wooden Sailboat

Rich compares the experience to owning a wooden sailboat.

“A wooden sailboat is wonderful,” he says. “But it requires constant attention.”

The first surprises arrived quickly.

Every toilet in the home needed replacement. The radon levels required mitigation. Heating and cooling systems needed significant work. Furnaces, air conditioners, and countless smaller projects demanded attention.

For nearly two years, the couple kept contractors, handymen, and specialists busy.



All while maintaining full-time careers.

Kathy continued working as a registered nurse, commuting to Spokane before eventually transitioning to remote work. Rich continued managing his business while overseeing a seemingly endless list of home projects.

Then there was the pool.

If the house was a wooden sailboat, the pool was an entire fleet.

When the Morses arrived, it was in rough shape. The plaster was failing. Tile work needed replacement. Equipment was outdated. Finding qualified pool contractors in North Idaho proved challenging, with long waiting lists and limited availability.



### Piece by Piece

Over the years, they tackled the project piece by piece. The pool was resurfaced. New tile was installed. Equipment was upgraded. Heating systems were replaced. Today it serves as the centerpiece of the property and the heart of summer life at the Morse home. "It transformed the pool," Rich says. The renovation work extended outdoors as well.



Some mementos from Rich's high school days and the couple's travels keep watch over the basement billiards room.



to them as "piazzas," inspired by travels through Italy. There is a piazza by the front entrance. Another by the back door. Others scattered throughout the property. Each creates a natural gathering place. A spot for coffee. A conversation. A meal shared with family. Or simply a quiet evening outdoors. The house also reflects the couple's enduring love for the Northwest. Rich has managed to recreate many of the passions he enjoyed in Seattle. He sails on Lake Pend Oreille and skis at Lookout Pass. The mountains remain close. The water remains central. The scenery changed. The lifestyle didn't. In many ways, that's exactly what the Morses hoped to find. A new home that still felt familiar. A slower pace without sacrificing the activities they loved.

Vaulted ceilings and lots of windows plus some mirrored interior walls provide ample light and make the space feel larger than it is.



Over time, the work of caring for the property became part of the rhythm of life.

The house slowly evolved into exactly what they had imagined during that drive home from Coeur d'Alene years earlier.



Family comes regularly.

Friends visit throughout the summer. Children, grandchildren, future in-laws, and guests fill bedrooms and spill out into the backyard. The swimming pool becomes command central. Croquet and bocce ball appear on the lawn. Dogs leap into the water. Conversations stretch long into warm summer evenings.

### The Morse Resort & Spa

The Morses jokingly refer to their home as "The Morse Resort and Spa."

The nickname fits. Yet the deeper purpose of the house isn't recreation. It's hospitality. "We consider our ministry hospitality," Kathy says.

That philosophy is visible throughout the property. The expansive outdoor living spaces feel less like formal landscaping and more like invitations to linger. Rich refers

A place close enough to Seattle for frequent visits but far enough away to build something new. Nearly eight years after that Memorial Day weekend visit, they remain convinced they arrived exactly when they

were supposed to. "There was such a sense that this is where we were meant to be," Kathy says.

That certainty carried them through every challenge—the repairs, the renovations, the unexpected expenses, and the long list of projects that still remains.

Because every gathering, every holiday, every pool party, and every visit from family confirms the same thing.

The house accomplished exactly what they hoped it would.

It became a place people want to come home to.



The couple embraced the challenge of maintaining nearly an acre of landscaping—a task that initially felt overwhelming.

The first autumn brought a moment of second thoughts.

Standing behind a push mower on a warm October afternoon, staring at what felt like endless lawn, Rich remembers wondering if they had made a mistake.

"What have we done?" he thought.

Fortunately, Kathy quickly found a riding mower. Problem solved.



## Treasured Heirlooms



Some of the most treasured features of the Morse home are its furnishings.

The dining room is anchored by a remarkable collection of family heirlooms that have traveled across generations before finding their place in North Idaho.

The carved dining table, chairs, and buffet belonged to Rich's maternal grandmother and date to the mid-1800s. Originally from the Midwest, the pieces came from a farming family with thirteen children, where sturdy furniture was expected to serve for a lifetime, and were purchased through the Sears catalogue.

Rich's grandmother, a proud Irish Catholic, was especially fond of Kathy from the moment Rich and Kathy met as teenagers.

"She really liked her because Kathy was a Catholic Irish girl," Rich says with a smile.

The furniture eventually made its way west to Seattle and became part of everyday family life. Holidays, birthdays, Sunday dinners, and ordinary evenings all unfolded around the same table that now stands in the Morse dining room.

Today, the set continues serving the purpose for which it was built: bringing people together.

Nearby stands another family treasure, an elegant china cabinet inherited from Kathy's



grandmother. With its curved lines and geometric detailing, the piece carries a distinctly Art Deco character and has followed the family from home to home over the years.

"This is going to be with us forever," Rich says.

The room also reflects the couple's love of travel and family history. Decorative

ceramic plates displayed on the walls were purchased in Orvieto, Italy, while several framed prints came from Kathy's uncle, a full-bird colonel who served as a medical officer in Europe during World War II. After the war, he developed a passion for collecting art, silver, and fine china, much of which has been passed down through the family.

Taken together, the furnishings tell a story of inheritance in its fullest sense—not merely objects passed from one generation to another, but traditions of hospitality, beauty, and shared meals that continue around the same table today.



Barb and Marty Mueller review a laser-cut project—one of many tools they've helped bring to life through Gizmo's hands-on makerspace.



## GADGETS AND GIZMO!

By Mark Sanborn

Inside Coeur d'Alene's makerspace where imagination takes shape.

If you're over forty, you may recall the line from Disney's *The Little Mermaid* when Ariel sings the song "Part of Your World." She says, "I've got gadgets and gizmos aplenty, I've got whozits and whatzits galore." I never knew what a gizmo was, but I have a much better idea now.

Ariel was referring to all the nameless human items she'd collected underwater while longing to become fully human herself. She had encountered a human, Prince Eric, while he was out at sea, and she was in love! And who doesn't enjoy a good love story, especially one that

includes a chance meeting, a successful business venture that involves outer space, and most importantly, a story punctuated with giving back?

Barb and Marty Mueller met nearly fifty years ago in a manner fit for a Hollywood script. They were both in New York City on business—Barb coming from Chicago and Marty from California. Coincidentally, they were both heading to Chicago as their next stop, Barb returning home and Marty continuing on another work trip. That fateful day involved rainstorms, flight changes, falling briefcases, and two soon-to-be best friends sitting drenched across from each other in the waiting area near their gate. Once onboard, they made sure to sit right next to each other on that two-hour-plus flight from New York to Chicago, and that planted the seeds of a beautiful friendship and marriage that eventually brought them to Coeur d'Alene.

Barb and Marty are makers. They make things. Whether it's woven, machined, cut, welded, programmed, lasered, or crafted, they can make it happen. Although they didn't know it at the time, Barb and Marty both grew up in the Chicago area about ten miles from each other. Barb initially thought law school would be her path, but ultimately



Marty turns wood on the lathe, a craft that reflects Gizmo's ethos: learning by doing, one project at a time.

life led her into the Chicago makerspace world. She learned how to weave and soon after took over the shop, not only growing the business but also the community of makers around her. While Barb stayed in Chicago, Stanford University, and eventually trade school, led Marty out to California.

Now living together in California after their “connecting” flight, Barb leaned on her entrepreneurial spirit and motivated Marty to step away from employment. Together they built a business that would take them to a galaxy far away.

Stemming from Marty's previous work experience, these two makers began to build custom photography and high-end camera equipment for Hollywood. How fitting! Over the next thirty-plus years, their equipment would be used to shoot many successful films and documentaries, including the recent films *Oppenheimer* and *Sinners*. Maybe the most rewarding and exciting shots their equipment would capture were on the space station as part of a relationship they had with the IMAX Corporation.

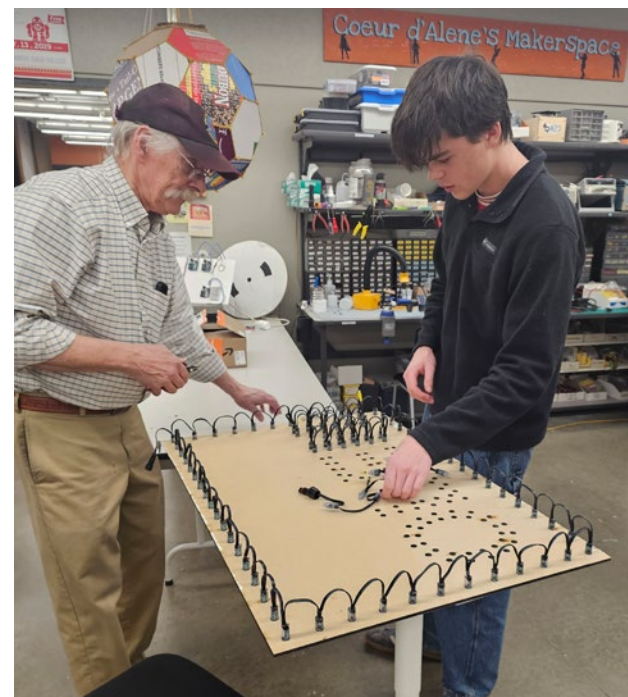
Fairly early on, the Muellers made the decision to move

their family and their business from California to Fourth of July Pass and eventually to Coeur d'Alene. With the success of their business and the ability to step away from day-to-day work responsibilities, these two civic-minded and self-proclaimed non-adult-minded makers were ready to start giving back to a community they had come to love.

Barb opened a clay shop on 4th Street, and Marty became involved with the Coeur d'Alene High School Robotics Program. Why? Because, as Taylor Swift might say, makers gonna make!

In 2013, there was a Coeur d'Alene Visioning Plan to consider where the city would be in the year 2030. One of the goals from this effort was to create an art space for the community. To do this, funding would be needed, so leaders approached University of Idaho Chief Administrator at the time, Charles Buck. These conversations led to a meeting at North Idaho College that involved over 300 attendees and ultimately sparked the idea of creating not just an art space but a fully functioning makerspace.

The Muellers were friends with the Dodge family, who had a space on 4th Street that would house this makerspace for the next three years. Charles Buck agreed to pay the rent with funds committed through the University of Idaho. Once, when Marty was asked what he did, his nephew spoke up and said, “Uncle Marty is a Gizmologist.” All of this led to the 2014 creation of Gizmo-CDA, Coeur



Marty mentors a young maker through a wiring project—one of many moments where experience is passed hand to hand.

d'Alene's community-driven makerspace.

Barb and Marty, along with countless volunteers, mentors, donors, advocates, and makers-in-training, have spent the last twelve years creating a hands-on makers wonderland. Many generous donations of tools from the community, equipment from regional tribes, and monetary commitments from banking institutions and corporations have been made, along with numerous grants written, to keep this incredible community gift accessible.

From its website, “Gizmo...is empowering through doing and builds creative confidence and curiosity through programs that give all people access to tools, technologies, and mentors. It's where imagination takes shape, and visions come to life.”

Gizmo is not about reading a book or learning theory, though that certainly has its place. It's a space to imagine, problem-solve, build, start over, and grow.

Barb and Marty have been very pleased with the growth of Gizmo over the years, starting in only a few thousand square feet and expanding to more than 10,000 square feet on the campus of North Idaho College. They have witnessed adults and youth working closely together on projects like an underwater tethered submersible being dropped one thousand feet to the bottom of Lake Pend Oreille. Not only did it explore the terrain, but it discovered the existence of Mysis shrimp living at the bottom.

Additionally, groups of adults and youth have helped with many near-space balloon launches over the years that reached heights of more than 120,000 feet. These launches included camera footage and parachute systems that allowed participants to retrieve what they captured and be further amazed.

In my opinion, GIZMO should mean Giving, Imagination, Zeal, Makers, Opportunity.

Who will be the next leaders, donors, mentors, and dreamers of this incredible organization? Something Marty likes to say when people ask how he made this or that is, “We didn't know we couldn't!” Gizmo teaches resilience, and Barb and Marty are the first examples of this. They have given of their time and talents and have witnessed the effects that Gizmo has had on this community.

Their resilience in keeping Gizmo vibrant has been rewarded with success stories of makers who have gone on to prominent universities, rewarding careers, and opportunities to give back by teaching and assisting others in becoming makers.

Barb and Marty have also experienced the joy of involving so many people with physical limitations, autism,

cerebral palsy, and learning disorders, as well as those who simply needed another path in education. Coeur d'Alene, and the world, needs this makerspace. Our human spirit is drawn to creating, so be sure to visit [gizmo-cda.org](http://gizmo-cda.org) to sign up for a class, donate, volunteer, or simply stop by and discover your inner maker. Help take Gizmo to even greater heights while becoming the next generation of Gizmologists!

*Photos courtesy of the Muellers.*

Mark Sanborn is a Business Broker with Murphy Business & Financial Corporation, serving business owners throughout Northern Idaho. You can reach him at [m.sanborn@murphybusiness.com](mailto:m.sanborn@murphybusiness.com) or 208-704-1060.



From first-time projects to deeper exploration, Gizmo offers an open door to hands-on creativity.

# From Notebooks to Next-Gen Luxury

AS TOLD TO *GATHER*

*How a 15-Year-Old Post Falls Entrepreneur Is Building the Future of Automated Retail*

At just 15 years old, Christian Banks isn't your typical high school student. While most of his peers are focused on homework and social media, Banks is running multiple businesses, pitching investors, and developing what he believes will be the future of luxury automated retail.

Banks started his entrepreneurial journey at just 12 years old. What began with a simple idea and a couple of notebooks has evolved into a portfolio of businesses spanning automated retail, web design, and nonprofit work. His first venture, Candy Kings Vending LLC, taught him the fundamentals of business ownership, supply chains, and customer experience from the ground up. For three years, he's been learning, pivoting, and building real companies while most kids his age are still figuring out their first part-time job.

Today, Banks is the founder and CEO of Vault XIV, a luxury automated retail company that aims to place premium kiosks in resorts, hotels, and high-end venues across the country. Think of it as a high-end vending experience, offering curated luxury products in sleek, tech-forward kiosks designed to match the atmosphere of five-star properties.

"I wanted to create something that didn't exist yet," Banks says. "There's no reason automated retail has to feel cheap. People deserve a premium experience even when

they're grabbing something quick."

In addition to Vault XIV, Banks founded Bibles Through Walls, a nonprofit organization focused on distributing Bibles to communities in need.

He also runs CB Web Design, offering website development services to local businesses in the Post Falls and Coeur d'Alene area.

Despite his age, Banks approaches business with a maturity that surprises those around him. He maintains detailed business notebooks filled with years of strategies, product development notes, and lessons learned. He's currently developing a comprehensive client relations handbook for Vault XIV and actively pursuing partnerships with resorts and investors.

Banks credits his drive to his upbringing in Post Falls and the challenges he's faced along the way. "I've had to figure a lot of things out on my own," he says. "But that's what makes it real. I'm not building this from a trust fund. I'm building it from scratch."

As Vault XIV continues to develop, Banks has his sights set on scaling nationally. For now, he's focused on locking down his first resort partnerships and proving that luxury automated retail has a place in the hospitality industry.

At 15, most people are just figuring out who they are. Christian Banks has been building businesses for three years and already knows exactly where he's going.

*Photos courtesy of Chris Banks.*



*Christian Banks, founder of Vault XIV.*



*Banks speaks at The Neighborhood Church, reflecting his work with Bibles Through Walls and local outreach efforts.*

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## Pen & Palette

*A collection of art & verse from our community.*

### Modern Verse

Dick Kellogg

I started a poem the other day.  
But soon realized, What could I say?' How do I fill these numerous lines?  
If I can't think of words that rhyme.

And make sense?

So then I thought oh what's the use?  
I'll just revert to modern verse.  
Where rhymes and breaks and punctuation!  
Varies in every situation.  
Dangling thoughts  
and an inconsistent meter, this free verse stuff is really easier.  
Lines that are short lines that are long, just make it up as you go along. The line breaks don't matter  
if they're here or there.  
It doesn't seem that anyone cares.  
Don't think about rhythm, don't bother with rhyme,  
It doesn't matter,  
Don't waste your hours.

---

### Mad King Lear

Mark Griswold

Take a right at the light but don't give flight.  
It's up. It's down. It's all around.  
Lose yourself to the rhythm of the moon.  
Be careful, though, not to swoon.  
The thick gray clouds obscure the day.  
But when the sun shines, it's time to make hay.  
The roof over your head doesn't keep the rain from falling  
Any more than the sun prevents the rooster calling.  
Be careful what you wish for. Your nightmares may be dreams.  
When you're awake, things are never as they seem.  
Mad King Lear wasn't crazy after all.  
Those who embrace salvation will be saved after their fall.



## Location, Location, Location

By Tamara Schweigert

I was going through a breakup when my best friend announced she had the perfect cure—tickets to see the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band.

I was beyond ecstatic. I practically knew “Fishing in the Dark” and most of their songs by heart. The breakup had drained me, and I needed something—anything—to pull me out of it, even if just for a weekend.

There's nothing like a friend who steps in and refuses to let you sit in it too long. She had it all planned.

After work, we'd drive to St. Regis for our special—pan-fried trout at the little restaurant beside the famous gift shop—stay the night, then head to Kalispell, Montana. We'd change at the hotel, grab a bite at a nice restaurant, and make the show.

All I had to do was sit back and let the weekend do its work.

Perfect.

After work on Friday, we headed out like she said, crossing into Montana as the light faded. We stopped in

St. Regis for that pan-fried trout—then settled in for the night before heading on to Kalispell the next day.

With time to spare, we wandered through Bigfork, drifting in and out of little shops along the main street.

“We've got plenty of time,” she said more than once, holding the door open as we stepped into an art gallery, pretending we weren't on any kind of schedule.

We always loved art. We had just spent two years sculpting in my studio with the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band playing in the background. Being there together felt familiar—easy and light. The weekend was already doing exactly what she promised.

Eventually, she pulled out her phone to look up the address.

Nothing.

She tried again.

I waited.

Still nothing. The woman at the gallery looked up at us, confused. “I don't know of any Kalispell Casino in Kalispell,” she said. “I've never heard of it.”

We both went quiet—the way you do when something doesn't add up.

She called her husband.

A moment later, she turned to look at me—the color drained from her face.

“The Kalispell Casino...” she said slowly, “is in Spokane, not Kalispell, Montana.”

I blinked.

She stared back.

“In Spokane?” I squeaked.

She nodded.

“We can still make it,” she said.

There was no time. No time to change. No dinner.

Then we ran.

I didn't even think about the hotel reservation in Kalispell—we canceled it somewhere along the way and kept going.

I rode shotgun, watching the road for deer while she kept her eyes on the speedometer, both hands easing through the curves of those narrow Montana back roads until we hit the freeway.

*I rode shotgun, watching the road for deer while she kept her eyes on the speedometer.*

We stopped once—for gas and a quick run inside—and then we were back on the road again, both of us, focused, determined to make it.

Nearly five hours later—through Montana, across Idaho, and into Washington—we pulled into the casino parking lot, grabbed our purses and ran inside.

We dropped into our seats with ten minutes to spare.

We looked at each other and laughed—half out of relief, half because we couldn't believe we actually made it.

The lights dimmed.

The band walked onstage.

We stood.

The crowd cheered.

And just like that, we were grinning like nothing had gone wrong at all.

When they started “Fishing in the Dark,” we glanced at each other—just for a second—and then we were singing. Every word. Here's the kicker.

I live in Post Falls, Idaho.

On any given day, I can be in Montana or Washington in under an hour.

And somehow, we managed to turn a one-hour trip into a twenty-four-hour adventure.

That, my friends, is what I call location, location, location.



*Tamara Schweigert is a retired award-winning bronze sculptor who now makes her home in North Idaho where she now focuses on writing.*



The abandoned Hecla Silver Mine in Burke Canyon, just north of Wallace, can have a haunted vibe to at times



## Wonderful Wallace

By Mark Griswold

The freeway narrows east of Coeur d'Alene. Pines crowd the shoulders. The mountains draw closer together until the road seems less to cross the Silver Valley than squeeze through it. Then, almost suddenly, Wallace appears below the interstate like a preserved fragment of another century: brick storefronts, faded painted signs, narrow streets, and mountains rising steeply behind every building.

At first glance, Wallace feels like a movie set. In a sense, it is. Much of the 1997 Pierce Brosnan film *Dante's Peak* was filmed here, and downtown still carries that cinematic quality—as though a film crew might return at any moment. But Wallace is more than charming scenery. Few towns in the Northwest have lived through so much history in so little space.

### Silver Built Wallace

Silver built Wallace. Hard rock miners flooded into the narrow canyons of the Silver Valley in the late 1800s,

carving entire communities into impossibly steep mountain slopes. Nearby Burke Canyon became one of the richest mining districts in America, with railroads, boarding houses, saloons, and bunkhouses stacked one atop another in the cramped canyon floor. The riches underground brought opportunity, but also violence. Labor disputes between miners and mine owners erupted repeatedly in the 1890s, culminating in explosions, gunfire, and the arrival of the National Guard. For a time, parts of the Silver Valley resembled a low-grade war zone more than a mining camp. Yet, it was still graced by some surprisingly big names. Roughrider President Teddy Roosevelt visited the town in 1903 and Golden Age Hollywood Starlet Lana Turner was raised in the town.

And like many frontier mining towns, Wallace developed a rougher side as well. Saloons and brothels once



Wallace gets ready for President Roosevelt's visit in 1903. (U of I collection)

operated openly here, catering to miners flush with silver money after long shifts underground.

Wallace, however, has never seemed particularly embarrassed by its past. Even today, the old Oasis Bordello remains preserved as a museum—not glorified, but remembered as part of the town’s complicated story.

“Wallace has never seemed particularly embarrassed by its past.”

Wallace also nearly disappeared altogether.

When Interstate 90 was routed through town in the 1970s, many expected the historic downtown to be demolished. Instead, local residents fought to preserve it, placing the entire downtown district on the National Register of Historic Places. In one of the more uniquely Wallace solutions imaginable, the freeway was eventually built directly over the town rather than through it. Today, concrete lanes soar overhead while life continues below much as it always has.

That stubborn refusal to disappear may explain why Wallace feels so alive today. It is historic, certainly, but not polished into sterility. Wallace still feels a little rough around the edges in the best possible way.

The best way to experience town is simply to walk it.

Park near downtown and wander slowly. Brick buildings line the streets with antique shops, old bars, coffee houses, and restaurants tucked into spaces that once served miners, railroad workers, and travelers moving through the valley. Historic signs still cling to upper stories. Neon flickers at dusk. Motorcycles line the sidewalks in summer, and freight trains still rumble through the valley floor.

### The Center of the Universe

Eventually, nearly everyone ends up standing around a manhole cover in the middle of Bank Street.

This is, officially and by mayoral proclamation, “The Center of the Universe.” The designation originated partly as a joke and partly as a challenge: nobody, after all, has conclusively proven otherwise. Children inevitably hop onto the circular marker while parents take photographs pretending skepticism they do not entirely feel. Wallace has always possessed a sense of humor about itself, and the Center of the Universe captures that spirit perfectly.

Just a few blocks away sits one of Wallace’s best family attractions: the Sierra Silver Mine Tour. Visitors board a small trolley and



The Stardust Motel hosts those visiting the Center of the Universe, be they Earthlings or beings from even farther away!

descend into a real underground silvermine guided by retired miners who spent years working beneath these mountains.

The cool underground air is a relief on hot summer afternoons, but the stories are the real draw. The tour transforms mining history from something abstract into something tactile and immediate. Children especially seem to love it—the helmets, the tunnels, the machinery, and the realization that generations of people once earned their living in these dark passages beneath the mountains.

Afterward, a stop for coffee downtown feels almost mandatory. Wallace’s coffee shops fit the town perfectly: relaxed, unhurried, and slightly eclectic. On warm



The tunnel where Ed Pulaski and his men hid out during the 1910 fire.

afternoons, families drift toward the ice cream counter at the historic general store while visitors linger on benches watching traffic roll slowly through town beneath the interstate overhead. Wallace rewards lingering.

### Into the Mountains

Some visitors come only for the downtown, but the surrounding mountains are equally compelling. One of the area’s finest hikes, the Pulaski Tunnel Trail, lies just south of town. The trail follows the story of Ranger Ed



Pulaski during the catastrophic Great Fire of 1910, one of the deadliest wildfires in American history.

As flames overtook the forest, Pulaski led his firefighting crew into an abandoned mining tunnel and forced the men to remain there while the firestorm passed overhead. Many survived because of his leadership, though several died from smoke inhalation. Today, the trail winds through cool forest alongside a rushing creek before reaching the tunnel itself—a quiet and surprisingly moving destination considering the tragedy connected to it.

The Silver Valley offers countless other opportunities for exploration as well. Scenic drives wind through Burke Canyon past remnants of old mining structures slowly being reclaimed by the mountains. Cyclists flock to the Route of the Hiawatha and the Trail of the Coeur d’Alenes. In autumn, the surrounding hills glow gold beneath fresh snow on the higher peaks.

### End of the Shift

More than a century ago, miners emerged from long shifts underground looking for a hot meal, strong coffee, or a cold drink; today, hikers and travelers finish their own long days in much the same way, with some good eats at



The Pulaski Tunnel Trail begins south of Wallace and follows Placer Creek.

one of Wallace's many fine restaurants.

The Fainting Goat has quietly become one of the anchors of downtown Wallace. Housed inside a beautifully restored historic building, the restaurant manages to feel elevated without becoming pretentious. After a day hiking or exploring old mining roads, few things sound better than settling into one of its booths for a pizza, burger, or glass of wine while evening light fades across downtown outside the windows.

The Blackboard Café remains one of downtown Wallace's longtime gathering spots, serving the kind of hearty breakfasts and strong coffee that feel perfectly suited to a historic mining town. The atmosphere is relaxed and unpretentious, with locals and visitors mingling beneath old photographs and well-worn booths before heading out to explore the valley.

Just down the street, the historic 1313 Club Saloon leans into Wallace's rough-edged past in the best possible way. With dark wood interiors, vintage décor, burgers, drinks, and the low hum of conversation drifting through the



The Fainting Goat celebrates Wallace as the fictional "Dante's Peak" with old movie posters and other mermabilia. Tasty woodfired pizza as well!



### Gyro Days



Every summer, Wallace embraces its wonderfully eccentric side during Gyro Days, one of North Idaho's longest-running small-town celebrations. The festival began in the 1930s as a miners' holiday and still carries the spirit of the town's rough-edged history, equal parts community picnic, street fair, and good-natured absurdity.

The weekend includes live music, parades, food vendors, and the famous "Gyro Ball" race, in which brightly colored balls float down Placer Creek beneath cheering crowds. Locals and visitors line the bridges while competitors attempt to guess which ball will cross the finish line first.

Like Wallace itself, Gyro Days refuses to take itself too seriously and that may be part of its charm.

room, the old saloon still feels connected to the town's mining-era roots rather than simply themed after them.

*Wallace remembers the miners, the fires, the labor wars...*

That contrast may ultimately explain Wallace's appeal. The town balances history and hospitality unusually well. It embraces its past without becoming trapped by it. Wallace remembers the miners, the fires, the labor wars, the bordellos, and the boom years, but it also remains a genuinely pleasant place to spend a weekend.

Perhaps that is why so many visitors return.

Wallace could easily have become a ghost town or a freeway casualty bypassed by modern life. Instead, it somehow endured. The old mining town in the canyon remains stubbornly alive: quirky, welcoming, weathered, and entirely itself.

And for North Idaho travelers looking for a memorable weekend only a short drive away, that may be exactly the point.

## Tubbs Hill & Cougar Bay:

Two Easy Hikes Close to Home  
By Gather Staff

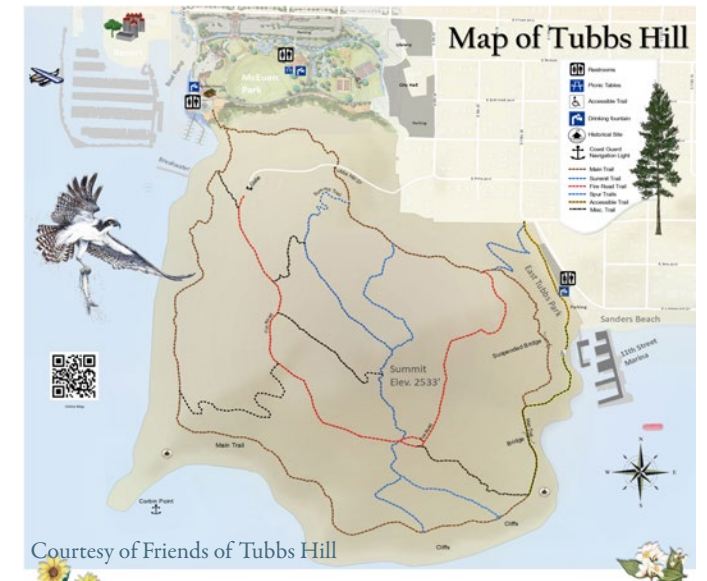
One of the quiet gifts of life in Coeur d'Alene is how quickly town gives way to trail. A Saturday morning can begin with coffee downtown and, ten minutes later, children can be scrambling over roots, watching ducks lift from the marsh, or peering down into the blue-green water of Lake Coeur d'Alene.

Two of the easiest places to make that small escape are Tubbs Hill and Cougar Bay. Neither requires a full day, special gear, or a heroic level of fitness. Both are close to town, friendly for families, and full of the kind of little discoveries that keep children moving: beaches, birds, bridges, old trees, rocky overlooks, and even an old bulldozer lost to time.

### Tubbs Hill

Tubbs Hill is Coeur d'Alene's front-porch wilderness. The 165-acre natural area sits right beside downtown,

*A view from the Tubbs Hill trail looking west.*



bordered on three sides by the lake. Its trail system has long been beloved by locals, and the main perimeter loop remains one of the best introductions to the city: a little forest, a little history, a little beach, and a lot of lake.

Tubbs Hill's story is closely tied to Coeur d'Alene's decision to preserve public access to one of its most scenic places. Today, it remains publicly owned, with trails winding through ponderosa pine, basalt outcrops, native shrubs, and lakefront viewpoints, and a few beaches. It



The Swinging Bridge

is the sort of place where visitors can understand the town almost immediately: downtown behind you, open water beside you, mountains in the distance.

For the classic route, begin at McEuen Park and find the west-side trailhead. The perimeter trail starts gently, with glimpses of the marina and lake opening through the trees. Follow the path counterclockwise along the shoreline. Soon the sounds of town begin to fade, replaced by waves, birds, and footsteps on packed dirt. As the trail wraps south, watch for rocky overlooks and small side paths leading toward the water. Families with older children may enjoy stopping at one of the beaches, especially on a warm day, though little ones will need a close hand near rocks and drop-offs. The trail climbs and dips but never becomes too demanding. Around each bend, the lake changes character: busy and bright near town, quieter and more expansive along the far side.



A Dogwood tree blooms near the east trail entrance.

Continue toward the east side of the hill, where the trail eventually leads toward Sanders Beach. The swinging bridge on this side of the hill is always a fun moment for



Gather North Idaho Summer 2026

kids of all ages.

From there, follow the loop back through the trees toward McEuen. The full perimeter is about two miles, but it feels shorter because the scenery keeps changing. Interior trails offer additional wandering, though fami-



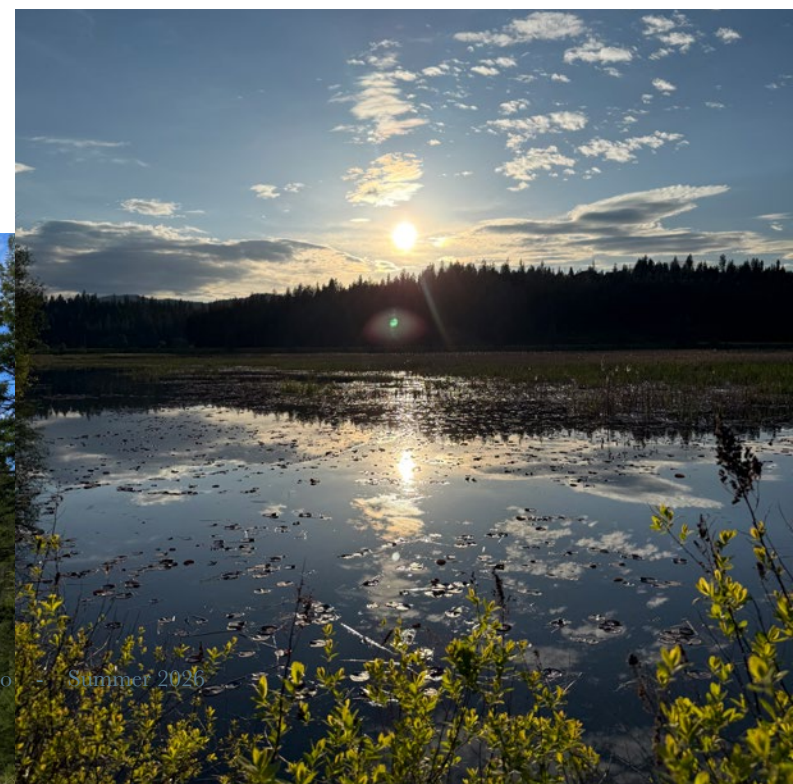
Courtesy AllTrails.com

lies wanting the simplest outing should stay on the main loop.

### Cougar Bay

Just southwest of Coeur d'Alene, Cougar Bay feels more secluded than it ought to. The preserve protects a rich wetland area where Cougar Creek meets Lake Coeur d'Alene, with ponds, channels, marsh grasses, cottonwoods, conifers, and open views toward the water.

Sunset over Cougar Bay Wetlands.



The Nature Conservancy helped protect the area, and the Bureau of Land Management later secured public access for the preserve, ensuring that this valuable wildlife habitat remains available for future generations.

For families, Cougar Bay is a good "slow hike." It is less about reaching a summit and more about noticing. From the parking area near Highway 95, begin at the main trailhead and look for the interpretive signs. The path quickly brings you into a mix of meadow and wetland edge. In spring and early summer, listen for red-winged blackbirds and watch for waterfowl moving through the reeds. Osprey and bald eagles are possible overhead, while deer, beaver, otter, and even moose are known to use the area.

Continue along the lower trail as it bends beside the marsh. Children will enjoy the bridges and changing scenery, including an abandoned bulldozer on the lower trail.

One moment the trail feels open and sunny, the next it tucks near the trees with the hillside rising above. Pause often. This is a place where the best views may be small ones: tracks in mud, insects skating across still water, a heron lifting slowly from the shallows.

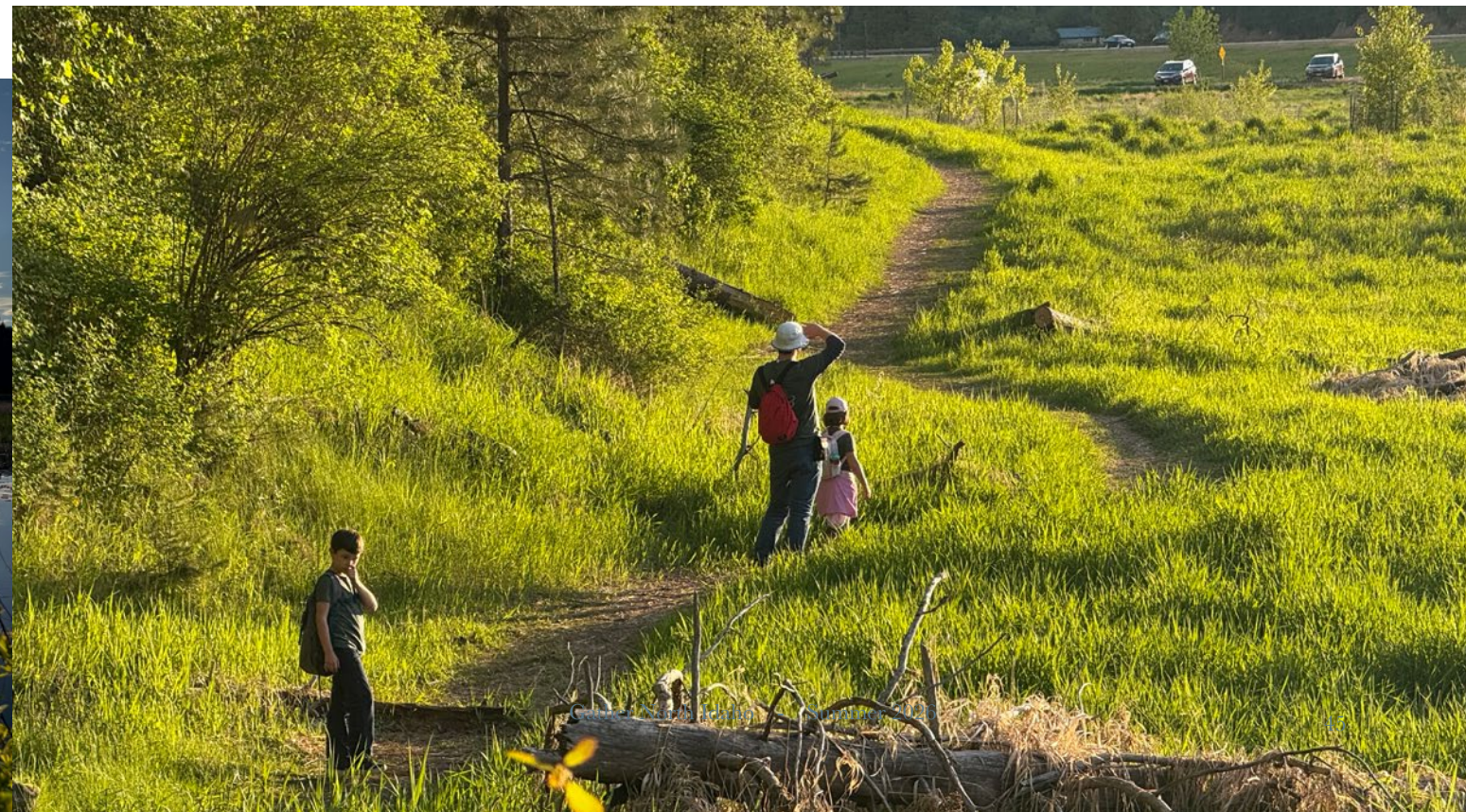
For a simple family outing, follow the main loop and return the way signs direct you. The route is short enough for younger walkers but interesting enough for adults, especially if you bring binoculars or a camera. Expect uneven dirt trail, seasonal mud, and plenty of reasons to stop. A slightly more strenuous path will take you up to a viewing



An abandoned bulldozer is a good place to stop for a snack.

platform near the summit.

Together, Cougar Bay and Tubbs Hill show two sides of Coeur d'Alene's natural beauty. One is marshy, quiet, and full of wildlife; the other is rocky, wooded, and wrapped in lake views. Both remind us that adventure does not have to be far away. Sometimes the best family hikes are the ones close enough to squeeze in before lunch.



# Restoring Health from the Inside Out

by Blake Merideth, Hometown Family Chiropractic

Every community has places that quietly become part of daily life—the kind of places families return to year after year. Not just when something is wrong, but when they want to keep living well. In North Idaho, HomeTown Family Chiropractic is becoming one of those places.

The practice was built on a simple but powerful belief: true health starts from within, and everyone deserves the opportunity to live life fully.

For the team behind HomeTown, opening their doors wasn't simply about starting a business. It was about serving their neighbors in a deeper way—helping people move beyond temporary relief and toward real, lasting healing. Their work is rooted in providing specific, modern, and results-driven Gonstead Chiropractic care, with a focus on restoring the body's natural ability to function as it was designed.

Rather than chasing symptoms, HomeTown focuses on identifying and correcting the root cause of dysfunction. By addressing interference within the nervous system, they work to restore proper communication between the brain and body—allowing healing to happen from the inside out.

As a full-family office, their care spans generations. Newborns, parents, grandparents—each season of life brings different demands, but the same desire: to stay active, present, and connected. Because good health is not just about comfort. It's about having the strength and

energy to show up—to work, to play, and to gather with the people who matter most.

That mission comes to life in stories like Megan H.'s.

"I have always lived an active lifestyle and worked as a veterinary technician for over 15 years. Between a physically demanding career, outdoor hobbies, and several injuries, I developed chronic neck and back pain before I even turned 30.

For years, I struggled with migraines and nerve pain. I saw multiple doctors, including a neurologist, and tried numerous medications, but nothing provided true relief. I met Dr. Erik and the HomeTown team at the Idaho Fair last year and decided to take a chance.

From the very first visit, the team was supportive, welcoming, and genuinely invested in my progress. After consistent care, I've experienced significant improvements. I can now do my job with far less pain and enjoy things like traveling and fly fishing without the same setbacks.

Now, I'm looking ahead to more trips without the fear of migraines or my body not keeping up. I'm truly thankful for the care and results I've experienced at HomeTown."

At HomeTown Family Chiropractic, stories like Megan's are the reason they do what they do. They believe health is not just about feeling better—it's about living fully. About being able to keep up with your kids, return to the work you love, and remain part of the life of your community.

One person. One family. One restored life at a time.

Because when health is restored, life opens up again—and the simple moments that matter most become possible: shared meals, weekend adventures, and the everyday gatherings that turn neighbors into community.

*Hometown Family Chiropractic is located at 291 E Apple Way, #101 in Coeur d'Alene and is open Monday to Thursday. Visit them online at [hometowncda.com](http://hometowncda.com).*



# Idaho's ed choice parents are helping save the state budget

They Deserve our thanks

By Chris Cargill, Mountain States Policy Center



Much has been said about Idaho's new \$5,000 education tax credit and the \$50 million price tag attached to it. Critics have framed it as a costly new entitlement at a time when the state faces budget pressures. But there's a critical fact missing from much of the debate: When a student leaves the public school system and uses the tax credit instead, the state saves money.

Here's why.

Idaho spends roughly \$9,000 per student, per year, of state funds on public education. Under the new program, a family that opts for an alternative—whether private school, microschool, tutoring, or homeschooling—can receive up to \$5,000. If that student would otherwise have been enrolled in a public school, the state is no longer responsible for the \$9,000 expenditure. Instead, it provides a tax credit.

That's a net savings of approximately \$4,000 per student - perhaps more - as not all students will get or need the full amount.

The total appropriation for the program is \$50 million, and current estimates suggest more than 20,000 students could apply when all is said and done. The program prevents students from being enrolled in a public school and being eligible for the credit at the same time. It's one or the other.

So the key question is how many of those students would be using the public schools without the help of the credit?

Currently, Idaho has roughly 310,000 students in public schools and about 35,000 in private schools or homeschooling. That's roughly a 10-to-1 ratio — ten public school students for every one outside the system.

If participation in the tax credit program mirrored that ratio, the overwhelming majority of applicants would come from public schools. Under that scenario, the fiscal savings would be substantial – at least \$72 million.

Of course, it's unlikely that participation will mirror that ratio exactly. Many families are satisfied with their local public schools and have no desire to change. Others who already homeschool or send their children to private

schools may apply for the credit to offset existing costs.

But even if we assume a far more conservative estimate — say, that only half of the 20,000 participating students would otherwise have been enrolled in public schools — the numbers are still striking.

If 10,000 students leave the public system:

- The state avoids approximately \$90 million in public school spending (10,000 × \$9,000).
- The state provides \$50 million in tax credits (10,000 × \$5,000 for those students, plus credits for those already outside the system).
- The net savings to the state from those 10,000 students alone would be about \$40 million.



And that estimate considers only state-level spending.

Local school districts also incur costs per student — administrative expenses, materials, and other variable costs that decline as enrollment declines. In other words, education choice is not just about empowering families — it can also ease budget pressures.

Critics often portray school choice as a drain on public education funding. But funding formulas are based largely on enrollment. When enrollment declines, state obligations decline as well. The tax credit simply allows a portion of those dollars to follow students into alternatives that better meet their needs — at a lower overall cost to taxpayers.

Importantly, this conversation should not pit parents against public schools. Idaho's public school system serves the vast majority of families and will continue to do so. But public education funding is not an end in itself; it is a means to educate children. When families choose different educational settings, the funding structure should reflect that reality.

Education choice introduces competition, flexibility, and innovation into the system. It gives families options tailored to their children. And in Idaho's case, it may do so while reducing state expenditures.

In a year when lawmakers are wrestling with budget constraints and competing priorities, that's worth serious consideration.

If even a modest share of participating students come from public schools, Idaho could see tens of millions in net savings — dollars that can be redirected to core services, tax relief, or strengthening education itself.

The "dirty little secret" in this debate is simple: empowering parents does not have to mean expanding government. In Idaho, it may very well mean the opposite.

And parents taking advantage deserve a thank you.

*Editor's Note: The deadline to apply for a Parental Choice Tax Credit has been extended to August 15th. To apply, visit [MySchoolChoice.Idaho.gov](http://MySchoolChoice.Idaho.gov).*

*Chris Cargill is the founder and president of Mountain States Policy Center, an Idaho based think tank devoted to empowering people to succeed through non-partisan, comprehensive, fact-based research that promotes free enterprise, limited government, and individual liberty. His work has appeared in several media outlets across the Inland Northwest and beyond. Visit MSPC online at [MountainStatesPolicy.org](http://MountainStatesPolicy.org).*

## THE IMPORTANCE OF HAVING A LAST WILL

by Harold K. "Hal" Prukop

The need for a Last Will and Testament should be on every adult's mind, whether they are married or single, and whether or not they have any children, and especially when they have a family that loves them and close loved ones and friends who may be worthy of being their beneficiary of their estate, or carry out the terms and conditions of their Will as the Executor, or Personal Representative, of the estate after they have passed away. The Will is often the FIRST thing I discuss with a potential client because it goes to the very heart of who they are and what they want to leave to the people who will survive them when they die. It is not just your property and your family and loved ones but it is also something that every American should take to heart, because if they don't then the state or jurisdiction in which they live will carry out their estate via "intestate succession" which often times is not what the decedent had in mind when they were alive.

### "LIVING DOCUMENTS"

These are the basic documents that should be included with your Will.

- a. Durable Power of Attorney for Healthcare Decisions. This is necessary when the patient ("Principal") is unable to make their own healthcare or medical decisions and they need someone to make them for them. I generally request at least 2, if not 3, persons to name here, the primary POA (power of attorney) and then one or two backups, or alternates.
- b. The Statutory Power of Attorney (for Finances); also called "Durable Power of Attorney for Finances and Property" is a power of attorney that typically takes effect when the Principal cannot make property decisions themselves. They generally have some level of dementia or other mental health disease or condition that precludes them from knowing or remembering what property they own and its value. The person who serves as the "Attorney-in-Fact" (POA) has fiduciary duties to include duty of care, loyalty, and to treat those funds and property the way they would if it were their own money or property.
- c. Living Will [also called numerous other names, including but not limited to "Healthcare Directive to Physicians," "Advance Care Directive"; "Do Not Resuscitate" (DNR)]. This is a document that specified the patient's CHOICES of what they want

doctors to do for them if it has been determined by at least two (2) licensed doctors they are in a "terminal condition" or a "permanent unconscious condition".

- d. HIPAA Authorization: this is the 1996 federal law called the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act that provides to whoever your POA (Attorney in Fact) is the right to see your otherwise "protected health information." This is important because it also includes any psychiatric or psychological records or any records dealing with that person's mental health or mental or developmental disease or disability.

### FREE CONSULTATION

Prukop Law Firm, PLLC grants a FREE, complimentary consultation on every Estate Planning client for however long it takes. It is more important to me to draft a truly CUSTOMIZED document that clearly reflects the Testator's INTENT and for whom they will name their beneficiaries than to simply fill out a templated boring version of a Will that one finds on the internet because clients want the DETAIL that they want, not just some average document not specifically tailored for their needs, including naming what bequests (tangible personal property) they want to make, and what other organizations, institutions or charities to whom they may want to leave something.

### CONCLUSION

If you are concerned about any of the issues discussed in this article, I recommend you reach out to my law firm and seek your complimentary consultation. I look forward to seeing how I can help you out with your Estate Plan and provide you the Peace of Mind you truly deserve.

*Harold K. "Hal" Prukop, Jr. is a military veteran and owns Prukop Law Firm, PLLC, located in Liberty Lake, WA. He is licensed in Idaho, Washington, and California. His practice is focused on Estate Planning, Elder Law, Probate, Guardianships, & Conservatorships. He can be reached at (425) 577-4686; Email [hkplawfirm@yahoo.com](mailto:hkplawfirm@yahoo.com). Office: 23403 E. Mission Ave., Ste. 200-J, Liberty Lake, WA 99019. [www.PrukopLaw.com](http://www.PrukopLaw.com)*



# Year-Round CSA



We have pick-up locations for Post Falls, CDA, Hayden, Athol, Sagle, and Sandpoint.

Gina Zapt is with Ann Snelgrove-McKerrac... and 3 others. 2d · 🌱  
Chris and I have this amazing haul from **McKerracher Family Farm** !!! They even grow all this all during the winter, too! Everything is healthy and perfect, we ended up juicing part of it and it was fantastic!

Thanks you guys!!!! 🍷🍷🍷



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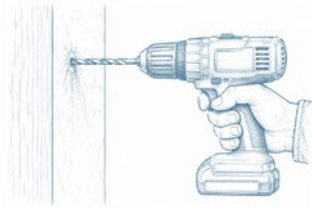
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SCAN TO BOOK

## What are you really buying?

By Mark Griswold



People often think they're buying a house. They're not.

There's an old saying in sales: "People don't buy a drill; they buy holes." Of course, even that isn't quite true. They don't actually want the holes. They want a place to hang a family photograph, a diploma, or a piece of artwork that brings them joy.

People don't buy products. They buy what those products make possible.

The same is true of real estate.

A home certainly provides four walls and a roof. It protects us from rain, snow, and cold. It gives us a place to store our belongings and sleep safely at night. But that's only the beginning.

What people are really buying is security. They're buying stability. They're buying a place to make plans five, ten, or twenty years into the future. They're buying a setting for family dinners, birthday parties, Christmas mornings, and ordinary Tuesday evenings that someday become cherished memories.

They're buying a place to build a life.

For many families, they're also buying an opportunity to build wealth. According to the Federal Reserve's Survey of Consumer Finances, the median homeowner's net worth is nearly forty times greater than that of the median renter.



While a home should never be viewed solely as an investment, it remains one of the most effective tools ordinary families have for building long-term financial security.

Homeownership often creates something less measurable but equally important: a deeper connection to community. People tend to care for what they own. They plant trees, maintain their properties, get to know their neighbors, volunteer in local organizations, and invest themselves in the future of the places where they live. Ownership fosters stewardship.

*The best home is the one that helps you live the life you want to live.*

That stewardship benefits everyone. Communities with higher rates of homeownership tend to be more stable, more engaged, and often safer. When people believe they have a stake in a place—when they know they'll still be there next year and the year after that—they are more likely to invest not only in their homes, but in their neighborhoods.

That's one reason the best home isn't necessarily the biggest home, the newest home, or the home that impresses other people.

The best home is the one that helps you live the life you want to live.

For some, that's a cottage near downtown where they can walk to local coffee shops and community events. For others, it's a house on acreage with room for gardens, chickens, and star-filled skies. For a retired couple, it may be a low-maintenance home close to grandchildren. For a growing family, it may simply be enough bedrooms and a safe neighborhood where children can play.

The right home is less about status and more about purpose.

My favorite movie of all time is *It's a Wonderful Life*. Most people remember it as a Christmas story, but I've always thought it's really a story about community. George Bailey spends much of the film dreaming about leaving Bedford Falls behind, only to discover that the life he built there mattered more

than he ever realized.

George's greatest accomplishment wasn't the Bailey Building & Loan. It was helping ordinary families own homes of their own. In one of the film's most memorable scenes, he and Mary welcome the Martini family into their new house in Bailey Park. The home itself isn't extravagant. What matters is what it represents: dignity, stability, opportunity, and a future.

The older I get, the more convinced I am that strong communities begin with stable homes.

Not necessarily large homes. Not expensive homes. Just places where people can put down roots, raise families, welcome neighbors, and build something that lasts.

If you're fortunate enough to have such a place, take a moment to appreciate it.

If you're searching for one, keep looking.

And if someone in your life is standing on the threshold of homeownership for the first time, encourage them. It may be one of the most important investments they'll ever make—not simply in real estate, but in their future.

After all, what we're really buying isn't a house.

We're creating a place where life can happen—a place where memories are made, roots grow deep, neighbors become friends, and community takes shape.

A place to gather.

### Featured Homes



5 bed/3 bath home on nearly a 1/3 acre near Dishman Hills Park. Spokane Valley. Newly remodeled open concept kitchen with island seating for 12.

\$665,000

Listed by Mark Griswold, Best Choice Realty



4 bed/2 bath with beautiful backyard great for entertaining. Located in one of Coeur d'Alene's most sought-after neighborhoods, Lake Forest West.

\$865,000

Listed by Gina Aubrey-Wertz, Best Choice Realty

Contact Mark Griswold, Refuge Properties/Best Choice Realty, to view these and other current listings or for help with selling your own home.

(208) 518-6527 | markgriswold208@gmail.com

RefugePropertiesNorthIdaho.com



# Backyard upgrades for summer

By Mark Griswold

One of the things I enjoy most about summer is seeing signs of life return to our neighborhoods. Lawnmowers hum in the distance, gardens begin to grow, and families spend more time outdoors. It's a season that naturally draws us outside and reminds us that our homes don't end at the back door.

When people think about home maintenance, they often think about repairs—cleaning gutters, sealing cracks, or replacing worn-out fixtures. Those tasks are important, but summer is also a great time to make small improvements that make your home more enjoyable.

One of my favorite projects is building raised garden beds. You don't need a large property or years of gardening experience to get started. A simple raised bed can be built over a weekend using basic materials and hand tools, often for a few hundred dollars or less. Even if you only grow tomatoes, herbs, or lettuce, there's something satisfying about stepping outside and harvesting food you've grown yourself.

Projects like these add more than value to a property. They add value to everyday life. A backyard garden creates opportunities to spend time outdoors, teach children new skills, share produce with neighbors, and develop a greater appreciation for the seasons.

The same principle applies to many simple backyard projects. A fire pit creates a place for conversation. A picnic table creates a place for family dinners. A small patio creates a place to enjoy your morning coffee. The goal isn't necessarily to create the most impressive yard in

the neighborhood. It's to create spaces that invite people to gather and enjoy life together.

If you're looking for a project this summer, consider starting small. Most meaningful improvements aren't completed in a single afternoon, but many can be started in one. A few weekends of effort can transform an unused corner of your yard into a place where memories are made for years to come.

## Summer Backyard Project Checklist

- Build a raised garden bed
- Add fresh mulch around trees and planting beds
- Install a simple fire pit area
- Build or refinish a picnic table
- Repair loose fence boards or gates
- Pressure wash patios, decks, and walkways
- Clean and stain a wood deck
- Add drip irrigation to garden beds
- Plant a shade tree for future generations
- Create a small outdoor seating area
- Install solar pathway lighting
- Trim back overgrown shrubs and vegetation

You don't need a massive renovation budget to improve your home. Often the best projects are the ones that encourage us to spend more time together, enjoy the outdoors, and invest in the place we call home.



# Market Update

A market that's finding its balance

By Mark Griswold

One of the questions I'm asked most often is, "How's the market?"

The short answer is that we're seeing something we haven't seen for several years: balance.

Homes that are priced appropriately are still selling, often within a reasonable amount of time. Buyers, meanwhile, have more options than they did during the frenzy of 2020–2022 and are no longer finding themselves in bidding wars every weekend.

According to the Coeur d'Alene Regional REALTORS®, the median sales price for single-family homes in Kootenai County reached \$555,738 in May, up 2.3% from a year ago. Active inventory remains healthy, and days on market have actually declined compared to last year.

In other words, the market hasn't stalled. It has normalized.

Interest rates continue to be the biggest factor affecting buyer behavior. While many people are waiting for rates to fall significantly, the general consensus among economists is that substantial rate cuts are unlikely in the near term. While the Fed's benchmark rate does not directly determine mortgage rates, and mortgage rates can move independently based on factors such as inflation, employment data, and broader economic conditions, a meaningful drop in mortgage rates is unlikely without a corresponding shift in those underlying fundamentals. For now, buyers should plan on mortgage rates remaining in roughly their current range rather than waiting for a dramatic decline.

Today's rates may not be exciting, but they are much closer to historical norms than many people realize.

At the same time, North Idaho continues to benefit from strong long-term demand. Even in recent months, I've noticed increased interest from people exploring a move from neighboring Washington. Tax policy changes, regulatory differences, and lifestyle considerations continue to make Idaho attractive for many families seeking a different pace of life.

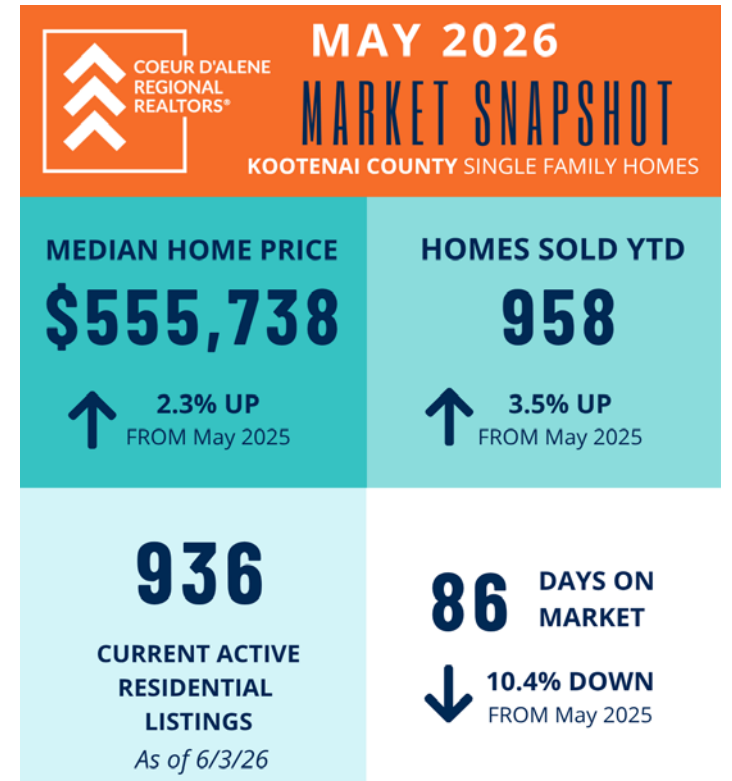
For local homeowners, that's good news. Demand remains steady, and our region continues to attract new residents who want what many of us already enjoy: safe neighborhoods, outdoor recreation, strong communities, and a high quality of life.

If you're waiting for the "perfect" moment to buy or sell, you may be waiting a long time. Markets move. Interest rates move. Life moves.

The better question is often not, "What will rates do next year?"

It's, "Where do I want to live next year?"

Because while you can always refinance a mortgage, you can't refinance a year of your life.



Year to date for May 2026. Site Built homes on less than 2 acres.  
Housing Snapshot provided by the Coeur d'Alene Regional REALTORS®.  
Data provided by the CDA Multiple Listing Service as of 6/3/26

# Summer Bucket

# List Challenge

How many of these can you accomplish this summer?  
Complete 18 out of 20, send us your photos, and we'll  
announce your name in Gather and send you a  
gift certificate to Hudson's or 32 Below.

1. Have a burger  
at Hudson's.



2. Volunteer at a  
food bank or  
soup kitchen.



3. Rent a boat  
at NIC Beach.



4. Drive around  
Lake Coeur  
d'Alene.



5. Attend a  
summer concert  
in the park.



6. Go to a  
farmer's  
market.



7. Go camping.



8. Catch a fish.



9. Spot a moose.  
(Mudgy doesn't count.)



10. Invite someone  
you just met to a  
picnic or barbecue.



11. Summit  
Canfield Butte.



12. Bike the  
Hiawatha Trail.



15. Write a poem or  
song for someone  
you love.



13. Float the  
Coeur d'Alene  
River.



16. Write a note to  
someone you  
haven't spoken to  
in years.



14. Eat a  
S'more.



17. Buy a book at  
Bookishly Happy.



18. Introduce  
yourself to  
a neighbor.



19. Spot a  
shooting star.



20. Visit the  
Rathdrum Zoo.



## North Idaho Summer Rankings

- 1-5 Explorer
- 6-10 Adventurer
- 11-15 North Idaho Native
- 16-17 Summer Legend
- 18-20 Bucket List Champion

# Before Hollywood, There Was Wallace



Long before she became one of Hollywood's biggest stars, Lana Turner was simply Judy Turner, a little girl growing up in the mining communities of Wallace and Burke.

Born Julia Jean Turner in Wallace on February 8, 1921, she spent her earliest years in the Silver Valley during a time

A childhood Lana walks up Seventh Street.

when mining shaped nearly every aspect of daily life. The steep hillsides, narrow streets, and bustling business districts of Wallace and Burke formed the backdrop of her childhood. While much of America would eventually know her as Lana Turner, North Idaho knew her first as Judy.

As a child, she attended local schools, played with neighborhood friends, and developed an early love for performing. Local accounts remember her dancing on Wallace stages, including an early appearance at the Liberty Theater building. No one could have guessed that the energetic little girl from the Silver Valley would one day become one of the biggest stars of Hollywood's Golden Age.

Life in the mining towns was not always easy. Like many families in the region, the Turners faced uncertainty as they searched for economic opportunity. In 1930, when Judy was nine years old, the family left North Idaho for California. Not long afterward, tragedy struck when her father was killed during an unsolved robbery in San Francisco. The loss profoundly affected the family and helped shape the difficult years that followed.

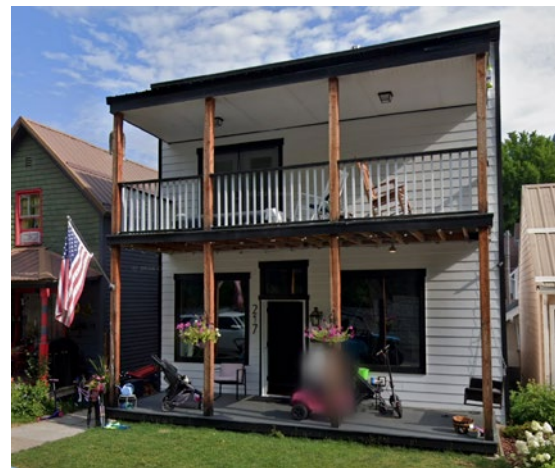
A few years later, Judy's life took an unexpected turn. Discovered as a teenager in California, she entered the film industry and adopted the name Lana Turner. Over the next several decades, she would appear in dozens of films and become one of the most famous actresses in America.

Yet before the movie premieres, magazine covers, and

bright lights of Hollywood, there was a little girl walking the streets of Wallace and Burke. The Silver Valley gave her her first home, her earliest memories, and her first opportunities to perform. Today, visitors can still see the house on Bank Street where she once lived—a reminder that one of Hollywood's greatest stars began her story in the mountains of North Idaho.



Turner went on tour selling war bonds during WWII. One of her stops was her old home town.



Lana Turner's childhood home at 217 Bank Street. It was recently beautifully remodeled. Prior to this location, she and her family lived in Burke Canyon.



## The Night the Band Didn't Show

A Short Story by Mark Griswold

Dan wasn't even supposed to be there. It's not that he wasn't allowed there. No one here really cared who blew through their little town so long as they behaved themselves. No, Dan wasn't supposed to be here because he was supposed to be somewhere else. No, that's not exactly true either. He wasn't supposed to be anywhere. It's just that he expected he'd be someplace else. Maybe on a beach, sipping a drink from a pineapple shell. One with one of those little cocktail umbrellas that looked good, especially in the photo on the menu, but was really just an irritation since it kept hitting you in the eye every time you went to take a drink.

He wasn't on a beach though. Instead, he was here, in a remote little town in North Idaho—he was tempted to call it godforsaken but didn't want to jump to such a rash conclusion just yet—wishing he had a much bigger umbrella. Sure, there was a beach, but no one would be down there tonight. It was too damn cold, too damn miserable, too damn dark. There would be drinks, too, but not the good kind. He was sure of that. The people here didn't

care about "top shelf" anything. That wasn't meant to be an insult. It was a compliment, actually. A town like this was populated exclusively by real people. They didn't have time for elitist nonsense. Those hippy-dippy yuppies from the next town over with their BMWs and Louis Vuitton purses could shove it. *I don't go for your taffeta covered view of the world, so unless you're willing to put on a Stetson and a pair of shitkickers, you better roll on outta here 'cause you surely ain't gonna roll with me!*

Screw it. Dan was going to drown himself in gin soon, so what did he care if he drowned in the rain first? He didn't even bother to run inside the bar. The locals would know soon enough he wasn't from around here but why give them all the more reason.

"Damn it, Scarlet! Where the hell is that band that was supposed to show up?"

"How the hell should I know, Francine? I don't even work here! If you want me to fill in for you every time that idiot cousin of yours gets too drunk on Wild Turkey while out huntin' wild turkeys, you best shut that lip of yours or I'll shut it for you!"

What the hell had Dan just walked into? The storm in here was raging harder than the one outside. The five other folks in the bar were watching basketball on the big screen in the corner.

"Hi, sugar, the kitchen just closed but the grill's probably still hot enough that Lenny can throw another burger

on, the woman named Scarlet said. “Course, not my fault if you get E. coli.” She busted a gut and Dan wasn’t sure if she was making a joke with her last line or just had an especially morbid streak to her. He was tempted to ask for a salad so he didn’t have to find out, but then remembered that lettuce carries E. coli as well. Plus, if he asked for a salad, he’d probably be thrown out headfirst.

*If you want me to fill in for you every time that idiot cousin of yours gets too drunk on Wild Turkey while out huntin’ wild turkeys, you best shut that lip of yours.*

“A shot of gin will be fine,” he ventured and hoped he wasn’t insulting the woman behind the bar or the cook.

“Suit yourself.” Scarlet reached under the bar, pulled out a nondescript bottle and poured a generous amount into a glass.

Dan sipped his drink. Straight gin, especially the really awful kind, wasn’t meant to be sipped. It was meant to be thrown back quickly for maximum effect. But Dan didn’t care. He wanted to taste each acerbic mouthful. If the bar had any salt and vinegar potato chips he would have had some of those as well. He was meant to suffer and suffer he would, to maximum effect.

A jolly and portly gal—in another thirty years she’d made a good Mrs. Claus—sidled up to the bar next to him with an empty wine glass that had probably been filled with a cheap chardonnay. “Thanks, Scarlet. I’m going to wander back home.”

“Alright, hun. I’ll put this on Fred’s tab.” They both laughed at some inside joke. If Dan wasn’t in the throes of melancholy, a melancholy that he was meant to savor, he may have struck up a conversation with her. Instead, he just continued to stare down at the half a glass of gin in front of him, half willing it to empty, half willing it to fill.

One of the basketball players on the TV made a three-pointer to tie up the game and the folks watching it cheered.

“Hey, Scarlet! I’m going to play something on the jukebox. Lighten the mood a little,” said a man in a black Stetson. Dan guessed he’d go for something by Garth Brooks. “Good. Good,” he thought. “Turn that knife. Hurts so good!”

Scarlet again reached under the counter and pulled out a remote. Dan glanced behind him. The “jukebox” was some newfangled digital contraption. Damn it. It was all so perfect until then. What was with all this modern technology? What was wrong with the old ways? That

wasn’t a jukebox, it was a joke box.

*I’ve Got Friends in Low Places* started up. Well, at least that was perfect. If Dan had friends, they’d certainly be in low places. He took another sip of his gin and felt the fire in the back of his throat as it went down. A trio walked in. Two women and a man in their late-twenties/early-thirties.

“You the band?” Scarlet asked, looking up from a glass she was washing.

“Fraid not. Just here to dry our feet and wet our whistles,” one of the women said. Wet our whistles? No one said that outside of a two-bit Western anymore. Plus, she didn’t have the twang to pull it off. She probably didn’t even know who John Wayne was.



“You need another shot, sugar?” Scarlet asked, coming back to stand in front of Dan.

“Sure,” he replied, then drained the last sip in his glass so she could fill it again.

Scarlet continued. “We were supposed to have this Bluegrass band show up. Loose Screws. This sort of shit happens all the time though. We’re so off the map out here that they often get lost and quit looking.”

Weren’t bartenders supposed to be listening to problems, not sharing them? What did Dan care? He’d listen to as many problems as people wanted to share. All the better. Tomorrow, all the problems in the world wouldn’t matter to him. He just had to make it through tonight.

If fate had stepped in at that moment, the next song on the “joke box” would have been Nina Simone singing *Feeling Good*. It wasn’t though. It was another Garth Brooks tune. *Much Too Young to Feel This Damn Old*. Fate was a bitch.

“Damn! What a game! Haven’t seen one this tight since Indiana beat Penn State in Triple OT three years ago,” a guy in a Wrangler jacket shouted.

Dan wasn’t a basketball fan but looked up at the screen and watched the kids on the court running back and forth. Pointless. Back and forth. Back and forth. Any game with a combined score over 150 was pointless.

“Can I use the bathroom before I go?” It was a strange request. Something only fifth graders usually asked. Dan half expected Scarlet to reply with a cheeky “I don’t know. Can you?” like his fifth-grade grammar teacher used to

do. Scarlet wasn’t his fifth-grade grammar teacher though. And this guy wasn’t a fifth grader, although Dan had seen some fifth graders who had more facial hair than the clown standing in the middle of the room, looking like he might start dancing around at any moment, trying to hold it in.

His look was made all the better by a “fauxhawk” and a Hufflepuff sweatshirt. It had to be Hufflepuff. This kid knew he wasn’t cool enough to even pull off something from Ravenclaw. Yet here he was in a bar surrounded by men in cowboy boots and women in embroidered shirts. Hufflepuff was even more out of place than Dan, but somehow Dan knew the kid absolutely belonged. At his ripe age of, what, 23?, Hufflepuff was as much an institution as Scarlet, Francine, and the absent Fred whose tab paid for Mrs. Claus’s chardonnays.

“Five dollars on the back of the toilet when you’re done,” Scarlet said to Hufflepuff. This time, she didn’t let out a laugh, making Dan wonder if she might actually be serious.

Even though this had been her standard reply going back a dozen years, Hufflepuff also didn’t seem to know whether it was a joke.

“Um, I have a debit card,” he said, shifting his wait back and forth on his feet.

“Just go,” the bartender sighed.

Two-thirds of the trio who had come in earlier got up from their barstools and walked over to the “joke box”. Garth had ended his sorrowful ballad and Dan wondered what would come next. Kenny Chesney? Big & Rich? Alan Jackson? Nope. Neil Diamond. *Sweet Caroline*. Dan knew that the entire bar would erupt in a chorus of “da-da-da” when those three horn notes played. He hated the idea.

“Oh, man! Looks like we’re headed into double OT!” Wrangler shouted again. Dan looked up at the screen. He had to admit, as much as he disregarded basketball, this was a bit exciting. It was all tied up and there were 2.5 seconds left on the clock. The team everyone was cheering for was running down the court toward their basket. At the buzzer, the kid with the ball tossed it from half court. It arced through the air and then, swish, nothing but net. The crowd erupted. “Holy cow! Did you see that?! Oh, my god! That was incredible! You couldn’t script the ending of a movie better than that!”

Hufflepuff emerged from the bathroom. Francine, the cook, emerged from the kitchen, a mop in hand. “Two-thirds” were joined by the “third third” and they began dancing in a circle as *Sweet Caroline* filled the air. Who needs the Loose Screw Band? Fate had a reason they were

probably driving around in circles right now looking for the turn off that led the way to this little hamlet.

Dan decided it definitely wasn’t godforsaken. If anything, it was blessed by the Lord. Maybe not in the way a lot of people think of a blessing, but, then again, the Bible was full of stories of blessings in disguise.

*The Loose Screw Band may not have shown up, but as he looked around, he realized there were enough screws loose in this place already.*

“You know,” said Dan. “I think I’ll have a mai tai.”

“Comin’ right up, sugar,” Scarlet replied as she reached for a bottle of rum. It was time to get the taste of the bitter gin out of his mouth. It was time for something sweet. Scarlet handed him the drink. She’d even put a little umbrella in it. He stood up and joined the group at the “joke box”. *Sweet Caroline* was still playing and when those three horn notes sounded, he joined in with the rest of the small crowd.

As he took a sip of his mai tai, he noticed a clock on the wall. 12:03 a.m. Morning already and he was feeling good. The Loose Screw Band may not have shown up, but as he looked around, he realized there were enough screws loose in this place already. He liked that. Sometimes, life could be a little too put together. He didn’t trust something that perfect. A life worth living needed to give way a little. It needed a few flaws, a few rattles and bangs as it ran along. Fate stepped in this time and the next song came on the “joke box”. No, not *Feeling Good*. Dan didn’t need to feel good anymore. Instead, Chuck Brown started funking it up with *Bustin’ Loose*, and the whole bar joined in, Hufflepuff displaying some crazy footwork. This was sweet. This was real. This was a Saturday night at RJ’s.



## Meet Local Science-Fiction Author

*G.S. Jennsen*



*What first drew you to writing and to science fiction in particular?*

A French teacher handed me Carl Sagan’s *Cosmos* in 9th grade. I devoured it, then Sagan’s fiction novel, *Contact*, and Asimov’s *Foundation*—and I was hooked. On the stars, on the infinite possibilities for our future, on the idea of exploring and discovering endless new wonders. I was always a voracious reader, but it wasn’t until many years later, after I left behind a soul-crushing law career, that I rediscovered the joy of creating and storytelling. When I finally sat down to write, there was never any question that it would be science fiction.

*What drew you to North Idaho and has this change of scenery influenced your writing at all?*

My husband and I spent twenty years zig-zagging westward from Georgia, with an extended stay in Colorado. When our friends moved to Montana, we fell in love with the mountains, towering trees and endless lakes, but we needed a bit more ‘civilization.’ Coeur d’Alene was the best of both worlds. I have a wonderful view of the mountains from my writing desk, and a stroll along the lakeshore is guaranteed to unstick plot problems or inspire a dramatic new scene.

*What does a typical writing day look like for you?*

Social media, answering emails and anything time-sensitive first thing in the morning (I get up early), then several hours of focused writing. After lunch I’ll get outside if the weather is nice, then work on business tasks in the afternoon. Then it’s reading time—need to keep refilling the well with great stories.

*What do you hope readers feel or think about when they finish one of your books?*

I want them to feel entertained by memorable characters and wild adventures, but also leave hopeful—reassured that humanity is stronger and better than we fear, that heroism still exists, and that individuals can change the world. If they close one of my books believing we’re worth rooting for, I’ve done my job.

*Who is your favorite author?*

Peter F. Hamilton has influenced my writing style more than any other author. He is a master of deep, expansive worldbuilding, galaxy-spanning settings and intricate, interwoven plots. To me, his books embody what science fiction should look like.



Visit G.S. online at [GSJennsen.com](http://GSJennsen.com) or catch her Friday, July 24, 5 pm at the Innovation Den in downtown Coeur d’Alene for “Contact & Conversation”, where we’ll be watching one of her favorite sci-fi movies, *Contact*, starring Jodie Foster, and then getting her take on the movie, *Carl Sagan*, and all things sci-fi.

## Worth Sharing

*What we’re reading, watching, and listening to.*

### Reading

*A Fine and Pleasant Misery*, Patrick McManus

The classic collection of outdoor humor from one of the Inland Northwest’s most beloved writers. Equal parts fishing stories, misadventures, and affectionate observations about life outdoors.

*The Legend of Flying Horses*, Sarah Vail

History, horses, mystery, and family secrets combine in an engaging novel inspired by true events and the remarkable rescue of Europe’s finest horses during World War II.

*Dawn of This Hunger*, Poems by Sally Read

In this collection, contemporary English poet Sally Read reflects on the story of the Incarnation, from conception to resurrection, in ways that resonate with our own lives and hunger for the divine



### Watching

*The Sandlot* (1993)

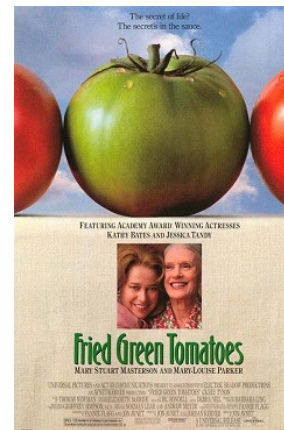
Because every summer needs at least one baseball movie.

*Fried Green Tomatoes* (1991)

A heartfelt story of friendship, resilience, and community, woven between two generations and set in a small Southern town.

*Boys in the Boat* (2023)

The remarkable true story of teamwork, determination, and ordinary young men accomplishing something extraordinary together.



### Listening

*Our American Stories Podcast*

Explore thousands of real American stories from defining moments in our history to everyday experiences that reveal who we are.

*Fishing in the Dark* — Nitty Gritty Dirt Band

*Sweet Caroline* — Neil Diamond

# Midtown

By Mark Griswold



*Forks in the Road* (2009)  
Jason Sanchez



*Well-Connected* (2009)  
Alan Dodge

We drive by it all the time, but how often do we stop to really take notice and enjoy all the wonderful and often quirky art that adorns Coeur d'Alene? Here are three pieces on 4th Street between Roosevelt and Montana in Midtown Coeur d'Alene. The next time you're in the neighborhood, stop and take a closer look.



*Fish Bone* (2009)  
Alan Dodge

# Everyday Miracles

*Stories of kindness, grace, and unexpected blessings from around North Idaho.*

The headlines remind us of the big stories, but most of life is shaped by smaller ones.

A kind word at the right moment. A helping hand. An unexpected reunion. A neighbor who quietly shows up when they're needed. A chance encounter that changes the course of a day—or even a life.

These moments rarely make the news, yet they are often the things we remember most. They remind us that goodness is still present in our communities and that even the smallest acts can have a lasting impact.

For our Fall issue, we'd love to hear your story.

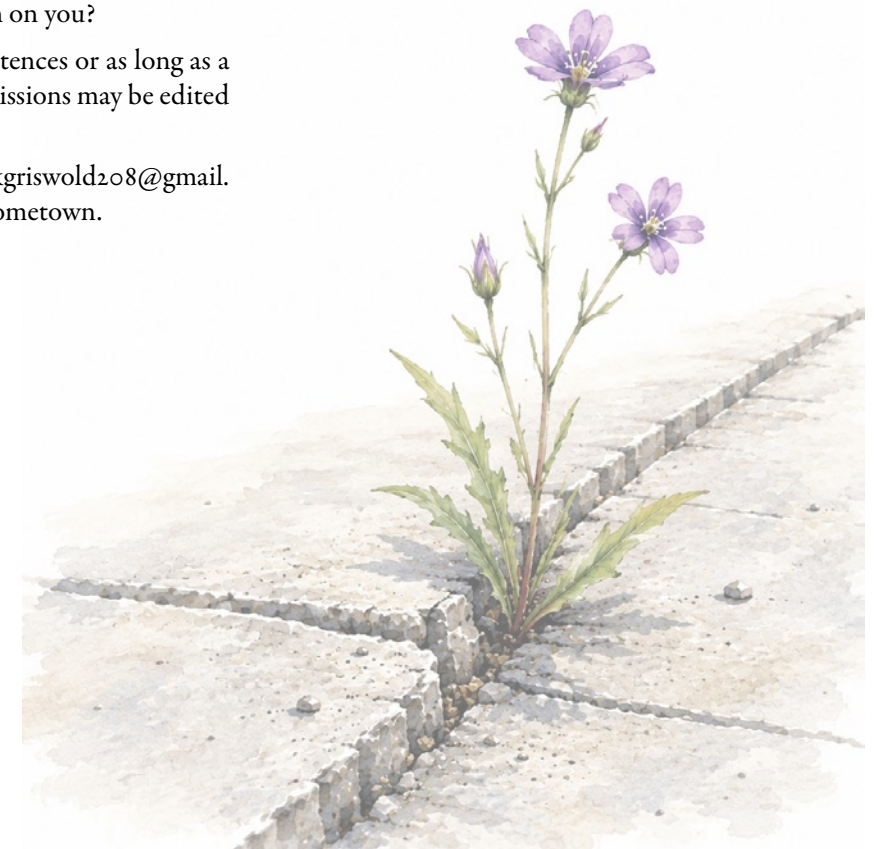
What everyday miracle have you experienced recently? What simple act of kindness, unexpected blessing, or moment of grace left an impression on you?

Stories can be as short as a few sentences or as long as a few hundred words. Selected submissions may be edited for length and clarity.

Submit your story by July 31 to [markgriswold208@gmail.com](mailto:markgriswold208@gmail.com) and include your name and hometown.

*"Not all of us can do great things. But we can do small things with great love."*

ST. MOTHER TERESA  
OF CALCUTTA



# An Invitation

If you've read through most of this magazine, you probably have a sense what it's about: community. Those who know me know I love bringing people together, be that connecting two new friends or partners in a business venture, or hosting an event for 70. I aim to continue that and doing so in person is always the best way to gather. My hope is that this publication will help spark those gatherings by introducing more of you to each other, to the people and places that make North Idaho our home.

And I need your help. Community is built by all of us, and *Gather* should be no different. If you have something you'd like to contribute, I welcome it wholeheartedly.

- Share your stories about local people and places. Who do you know who has an amazing story to tell? Maybe it's you!
- What are your favorite places here in North Idaho or in nearby Washington or Montana? What restaurants, coffee shops, local events, and other businesses should we know about? What hikes or small towns are worth a visit?
- What projects are you working on that might better our community or even the world?
- What books are you reading? What movies do you love? What music are you listening to? What are you cooking up in your kitchen?

*Gather* also welcomes:

- personal essays and reflections about community, family, faith; poetry, short fiction, photography, and art.
- Anything that helps neighbors know one another and strengthens the place we share belongs in *Gather*.

There are other ways to help, too.

If you own a business or know someone who does, I'd be grateful for introductions to people who may be interested in advertising in future issues. Advertising helps cover printing costs and makes it possible to keep distributing the magazine throughout our community.

And share it! Pass your copy to a friend. Leave it on a coffee table. Tell someone about an article you enjoyed. Community grows one conversation at a time.

This first issue is only a small beginning. My hope is that *Gather* continues to grow into something that belongs not just to me, but to all of us.

One final note. Many readers know me primarily as a real estate agent, and that business is what allows projects like this to exist. If you know someone who is considering buying or selling property, I would be grateful for the introduction.

More than anything, though, I'm grateful that you're here.

Thank you for reading.

Mark Griswold  
Founder, Publisher, and Curator  
Gather North Idaho



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# From the Commonplace Book

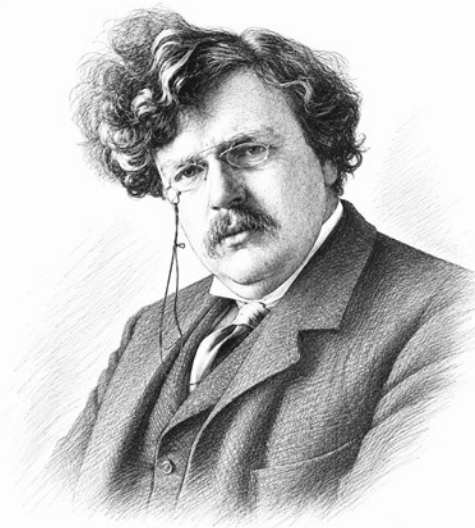
*Inspired by the old tradition of the commonplace book:*

*a collection of passages, poems, and ideas worth remembering and sharing.*

In this passage from *Orthodoxy* (Chapter 5, “The Flag of the World”), Chesterton argues that true love of a place doesn’t mean overlooking its flaws. Rather, it means loving it enough that you would never abandon it—and loving it enough that you seek to make it the best it can be

Let us suppose we are confronted with a desperate thing-- say Pimlico. If we think what is really best for Pimlico we shall find the thread of thought leads to the throne or the mystic and the arbitrary. It is not enough for a man to disapprove of Pimlico: in that case he will merely cut his throat or move to Chelsea. Nor, certainly, is it enough for a man to approve of Pimlico: for then it will remain Pimlico, which would be awful. The only way out of it seems to be for somebody to love Pimlico: to love it with a transcendental tie and without any earthly reason. If there arose a man who loved Pimlico, then Pimlico would rise into ivory towers and golden pinnacles; Pimlico would attire herself as a woman does when she is loved. For decoration is not given to hide horrible things: but to decorate things already adorable. A mother does not give her child a blue bow because he is so ugly without it. A lover does not give a girl a necklace to hide her neck. If men loved Pimlico as mothers love children, arbitrarily, because it is THEIRS, Pimlico in a year or two might be fairer than Florence. Some readers will say that this is a mere fantasy. I answer that this is the actual history of mankind. This, as a fact, is how cities did grow great. Go back to the darkest roots of civilization and you will find them knotted round some sacred stone or encircling some sacred well. People first paid honour to a spot and afterwards gained glory for it. Men did not love Rome because she was great. She was great because they had loved her.

*Men did not love Rome because she was great.  
She was great because they had loved her.*



# Vespers

## Flat-Tire-Fixer

A winding road, a prayer on the drive, and two new jobs.

By Scott Davis



*Both jobs were about being  
there when someone needed  
help.*

### Second Grade

When I was in second grade at Catholic school in Philly, we were asked what we wanted to be when we grew up. My answer (my mom tells me, as I don’t remember it myself) was “a flat-tire-fixer or a priest.” I was only six at the time, so I don’t think I was trying to be clever. To me (now 47), looking back, my six-year-old logic makes sense: both jobs were about being there when someone needed help. Being helpful, useful, ready with whatever tools were needed to get someone moving again. Back when I was asked this question I had a genuine, uncomplicated love for God.

### Away

As is pretty common for most of us Americans, life rarely follows the path that looks good to us in elementary school, and I wound up spending a long time away from the Church. When I look back now at that kid in second grade, I feel a pang of sadness knowing that once-pure connection

with God was lost. I know now, of course, that God never really left me, it was only me that wandered off the path, away from Him. I kind of think of those years as unintended field research.

To be a decent flat-tire-fixer you need to know how to handle a tire that’s taken some damage, that’s had some miles, seen some road. To know where you really want to be without having, for a time, been away from it.

After a long time in which I felt like I was observing the world as an



Scott in 2nd Grade

outsider, after working various jobs over the decades, and never really finding my “thing,” I am grateful to God that He helped me find my way back home, to the Catholic church.

In the 2010s I found myself working in pharmacies as a tech, but I left right around the beginning of COVID because my wife had developed some health problems, and COVID aside, I didn’t want to bring anything home to attack her already-diminished immune system. So I found other work. I was grateful to have a friend working in the receiving area of a grocery store who brought me on as his assistant manager. It was honest, physical work, and I liked the people there, but after a time I felt like I was hitting a wall, like I was in stasis. And I have always had a deep love for machines. For years now I have spent much of my time studying, experimenting, working, and playing with AI (Artificial Intelligence), educating myself on it. And one night in February of 2023, in a moment of weakness, I broke one of my own rules. I usually try to only ask God for things for other people, but I was feeling almost desperate for some reason, like my time to do something else was running out. I asked God, that if it seemed good to Him, to please put me in the way of a job where I could possibly contribute something meaningful to my species, something with AI that would let me help people. I made this prayer, this request, as I was driving to RCIA [Ed: Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults/Catholic Confirmation class] where I was happy to think of myself as a “chair-mover.” Driving seems to

be when I speak most easily with God. Well, about an hour later, I was standing outside directing people into the church where our priest was giving the class a tour of the sanctuary. Father Len walked up to me and asked if I had ever thought about being a Deacon.

### The Prayer

I was stunned for a second. My mind was still locked in on the “AI job” I was harassing God about earlier, and I was now being handed an invitation to consider entering into one of the oldest institutions on earth. My immediate response unfortunately wasn’t exactly thoughtful or meaningful. All I managed was “I don’t think I have the bandwidth for daily prayers.” I think I was intimidated by the sheer mechanics and responsibility of being a Deacon, and also by the commitment to praying the Liturgy of the Hours (Morning and Evening Prayer) every day for the rest of my life.

*I didn’t have to stop loving science to find my way back to God.*

I know, since I used to be one of them, that a lot of people think science and religion are opposing forces, treating them like competing operating systems. If you believe the universe was designed by a logical Architect, then studying the physics of it doesn’t disprove His existence, it’s literally studying His blueprints. Making useful and amazing things using the resources He’s provided for us, using the minds He’s given to us to understand the world He built for us...

Well, I didn’t have to stop loving science to find my way back to God. We’re just discovering what He already put in place at the beginning of all things. Everything in the world is running from one source. When my prayer to God for an AI job came up against the idea of entering formation for the Diaconate, I was forced to realize I was still running some old code from my time away. I was still in some small way, separating God, in my mind, from the rest of the world, thinking I could only do one thing or the other. I didn’t at first understand that the Diaconate was the door God was opening for me to still be both a “flat-tire-fixer” and someone who can still serve Him by serving others.

*I asked Him for a way to be useful and He handed me two new jobs.*

### Formation

After a lot of prayer, mentally battling with myself, back and forth, yes and no, and ending all of that by telling myself I was definitely going to say no... I applied to enter formation. I didn’t do this because I believe I’m some holy guy who never lost his way. I’m most definitely not. I’m doing it because God essentially called my bluff. I asked Him for a way to be useful, to help people, and He handed me two new jobs. In this interesting world of strange and wonderful things, both natural and mechanical, it’s taken over 40 years for me to get back to the path I think He was pointing me towards back in second grade.

### Returning

Shortly before entering formation, I began working in the parish office. I’m very grateful for this, what I jokingly refer to as on-the-job training for the Diaconate, but that’s what it really is. And honestly, it’s all a bit surreal still at times. Among other things, I’m actually able to help people with technology, and teach AI classes right here at the parish. God, in His creative generosity, found a way for me to do exactly what I asked Him for, just not with the tools I was expecting to be using when I was in second grade.

*Scott Davis currently works in Administrative Services at Pope St. Pius X Catholic Church and is entering his third year of formation as a deacon.*



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*"Be still, and know that I am God."*  
— PSALM 46:10



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