

May 2020

# BLOOT



# Editor's Note

Readers,

This will be my last issue creating Blot Magazine and I can't believe how fast my four years have flown by. My team has worked incredibly hard this past year delivering stories that impact our community. From showing Vandal pride for homecoming, exploring the issue of mental health on campus, to diving into the controversial topic of climate change — this issue is no different.

This issue we have delivered stories worth telling — such as what it's like to be transgender in a rural community — in the best way we could during the COVID-19 pandemic. My reporters had to conduct phone interviews, my photographers couldn't take photos of people anymore and my designers had to design at home.

When we initially planned this issue in March, I didn't expect any of this to happen. Because of COVID-19, my last issue of Blot couldn't be printed and handed out to the community. This issue needed to be released digitally.

This was a huge change for me and my staff, but I believe it has made my team stronger. My staffers had the option to leave, but none of them did. They continued to work hard and commit to telling stories for a publication they care about.

With everything that has been going on, I am incredibly proud of my team. Every one of them showed drive and passion, they conducted their work to the best of their ability.

They are each incredibly talented individuals and if you do not know them — you should. Even though this issue isn't being printed — one thing has stayed consistent.

I've been able to create this publication with my Blot family and I am so grateful for that.

Here is to the past and the present. Stories told and stories yet to be told.

Thank you Blot for all the memories you've given me over the years. I will never forget them.

Goodbye,



Lindsay Trombly  
Editor-in-Chief

# The Team

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# In This Issue





# Humans of Moscow

STORY BY  
COURTESY PHOTO  
DESIGN BY

Lizzie Holdridge  
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Taylor Lund

Katie Nolan, a University of Idaho senior, reflects on being a Vandal and shares her feelings about COVID-19 cutting her last year short.

Read the full Q&A at  
[blotmagazine.com](https://blotmagazine.com).

**Q:** How did you feel when you received the news that classes were going online for the rest of the semester? How did you feel when you heard commencement was cancelled?

**A:** “To be honest, I was devastated. I never thought that college would end like this. I felt robbed of the memories I was supposed to make within these last few months of college — it was really surreal. But the thing that really impacted me the most was that I felt like I had been robbed of my closure. In the midst of transitioning into such an uncertain time of my life, I felt forced to grow up a little bit quicker than anticipated.”

**Q:** What will you miss most about Moscow and UI?

**A:** “There are so many things I will miss about Moscow, but the thing I will miss the most are the people. My friends, professors, coworkers, mentors, supervisors and classmates made my experience at UI worthwhile. The connections I have created at UI have become some of the most special relationships in my life.”

**Q:** How are you staying positive and hopeful during this time, even with your senior year being cut short?

**A:** “Though my senior year was abruptly cut short, I have to believe that maybe there’s a silver lining I can’t fully see quite yet. I’ve been given the opportunity to spend quality time with my family — who knows when I will be able to do this again once I get a full time job, potentially in a completely different state. I feel fortunate I have a family to live with, two amazing jobs I’m still able to receive an income for and that I even have a home to shelter in. These are huge privileges.”



## IMAGE ABOVE

Katie Nolan stands  
outside the Integrated  
Research and  
Innovation Center.

**Q:** Do you have any advice for people to get through this?

**A:** “You have the right to feel all of your feelings. You have the right to mourn your losses; no matter how big or small they may be. Your feelings are valid. Whether you are mourning the abrupt ending of your semester, a spring break trip, an anticipated school event, your commencement ceremony or whatever it may be your feelings are valid and this will all pass. Also, to my fellow class of 2020 graduates, we may not receive a proper graduation ceremony, but it doesn’t take away from this major accomplishment. Be proud of yourself, because you did it.”

# FACES OF FIRE

## FIRE SHAPES IDAHO'S FORESTS AND LIVES

A cigarette is tossed out of a car and smolders in the dry brush and weeds lining the highway.

Between the wind from passing cars and the dried-out brush, the fire spreads, well, like wildfire.

At a campsite in the forest, a campfire not fully extinguished creeps back to life, crawling towards the pine needles and dead plants littering the site.

What starts as a small spark grows to create a larger blaze which, in its hunger, starts to consume the forest.

Children play with fireworks, anticipating the Fourth of July, but a firework lands in the top of a tree.

During a thunderstorm, after weeks of record heat, a lightning bolt hits a dried-out tree stump just right and starts a blaze.

Wildfires have a variety of starting points and cause varying degrees of damage. But wildfires are also a key part of keeping many forests healthy.

During the 2019 fire season, the National Interagency Fire Center reported over 260,000 acres of Idaho forest burned in wildfires.

These fires cost millions in damage when they reach homes or communities.

### FIRE BY NUMBERS

Penelope Morgan, a retired University of Idaho professor, said fire is part of the land's personality.

Before the 1900's, fires in the United States burned about five to eight times more land than they do now, meaning 1 to 2 million acres of Idaho burned on average, Morgan said.

Fire season in Idaho today is longer, Morgan said, having increased by 32 days since 1984.

But fire as Morgan said, is part of the land's personality — it is neither good nor bad.

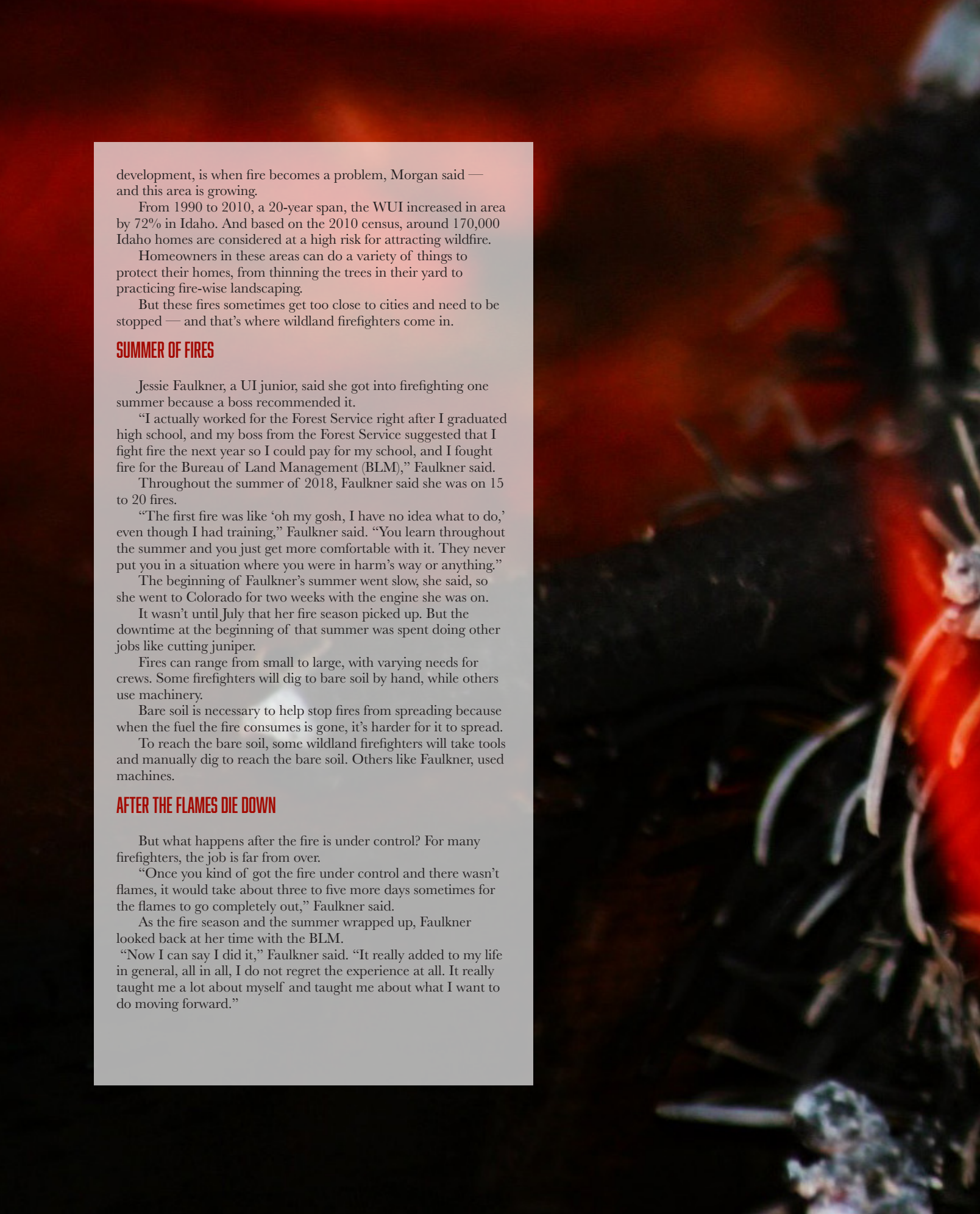
“Fires consume fuels, rejuvenate vegetation, release soil nutrients and provide landscape diversity and habitat for birds, mammals and plants. But they also create smoke, threaten people and property, can cause erosion and can kill some trees,” Morgan said.

When fires enter the wildland-urban interface (WUI), the zone where wildland gives way to human

STORY BY  
PHOTOS BY  
DESIGN BY

*Kali Nelson  
Dakota Brown  
Taylor Lund*





development, is when fire becomes a problem, Morgan said — and this area is growing.

From 1990 to 2010, a 20-year span, the WUI increased in area by 72% in Idaho. And based on the 2010 census, around 170,000 Idaho homes are considered at a high risk for attracting wildfire.

Homeowners in these areas can do a variety of things to protect their homes, from thinning the trees in their yard to practicing fire-wise landscaping.

But these fires sometimes get too close to cities and need to be stopped — and that's where wildland firefighters come in.

## SUMMER OF FIRES

Jessie Faulkner, a UI junior, said she got into firefighting one summer because a boss recommended it.

“I actually worked for the Forest Service right after I graduated high school, and my boss from the Forest Service suggested that I fight fire the next year so I could pay for my school, and I fought fire for the Bureau of Land Management (BLM),” Faulkner said.

Throughout the summer of 2018, Faulkner said she was on 15 to 20 fires.

“The first fire was like ‘oh my gosh, I have no idea what to do,’ even though I had training,” Faulkner said. “You learn throughout the summer and you just get more comfortable with it. They never put you in a situation where you were in harm’s way or anything.”

The beginning of Faulkner’s summer went slow, she said, so she went to Colorado for two weeks with the engine she was on.

It wasn’t until July that her fire season picked up. But the downtime at the beginning of that summer was spent doing other jobs like cutting juniper.

Fires can range from small to large, with varying needs for crews. Some firefighters will dig to bare soil by hand, while others use machinery.

Bare soil is necessary to help stop fires from spreading because when the fuel the fire consumes is gone, it’s harder for it to spread.

To reach the bare soil, some wildland firefighters will take tools and manually dig to reach the bare soil. Others like Faulkner, used machines.

## AFTER THE FLAMES DIE DOWN

But what happens after the fire is under control? For many firefighters, the job is far from over.

“Once you kind of got the fire under control and there wasn’t flames, it would take about three to five more days sometimes for the flames to go completely out,” Faulkner said.

As the fire season and the summer wrapped up, Faulkner looked back at her time with the BLM.

“Now I can say I did it,” Faulkner said. “It really added to my life in general, all in all, I do not regret the experience at all. It really taught me a lot about myself and taught me about what I want to do moving forward.”



**IMAGE BEHIND**  
A flame burns in a fire pit,  
creating a pile of char.





# 33,000 FILMS LATER

Remembering Main Street Video Co-op after its closure

## CREDITS

STORY BY.....*Lindsay Trombly*

PHOTOS BY.....*Dani Moore*

ILLUSTRATIONS BY.....*Kristen Lowe*

DESIGN BY.....*Lindsay Trombly*

On Tuesday, March 31, 2020, at approximately 3:21 p.m. via Facebook, Main Street Video Co-op, beloved video rental store in Moscow, announced their permanent closure. Cause of death: COVID-19.

Connor O'Rourke, manager of the video co-op, said the store's untimely death occurred after it was deemed a non-essential business. This coupled with a lack of revenue, and the building being sold, made it impossible for the store to keep its doors open. He said if COVID-19 didn't happen, a full recovery may have been possible.

"There was the process of leaving your house, going out and getting stuff, you know, that kind of made it so people didn't want to come in," O'Rourke said. "We were at the state of 'Oh you have to close down.' So I think that's just something we were looking where, well, I don't think we can financially recover from this."

O'Rourke said their full collection of films are being stored in the Kenworthy Performing Arts Centre, something he hopes could turn into another video store. The collection includes Blu-Ray discs, DVDs and VHS tapes. The movies in the store were mostly based off customer recommendations — consisting of 33,000 titles.

"The good news is, at least the whole collection is still in one piece and it's still in one place," O'Rourke said. "They are the type of people who tend to care about movies, so hopefully they do something with it, where they make it available to public."

The video store was deeply rooted in the Moscow community. The closure impacted members of the community who rented regularly.

Courtney Berge has been going to the video co-op ever since she was a little girl, renting movies there consistently for years.

"When I was a kid I was homeschooled and I would go to coffee with my grandfather on Thursday mornings. And it (the store) was just down the street, so





**IMAGE ABOVE**

Moscow Video Co-op displays 33,000 titles for customers.

I went one day, and I started renting movies for their five-for-five. It was five movies, for five nights, for \$5, which I could afford as a child,” Berge said. “I’d get five movies and I’d watch them over the week. Then I would return them and do it again. I fell in love with old movies and I just would go there and rent everything I could.”

Berge said she was sad when she learned about the closure because there’s “nothing like the experience of renting a film at a video store.”

“It was always just a content place to be,” Berge said. “You’re never stressed when you’re going to rent a movie. I was never in a rush, it was always just a time to browse, and take my time, and figure out what I wanted to spend my time with that evening.”

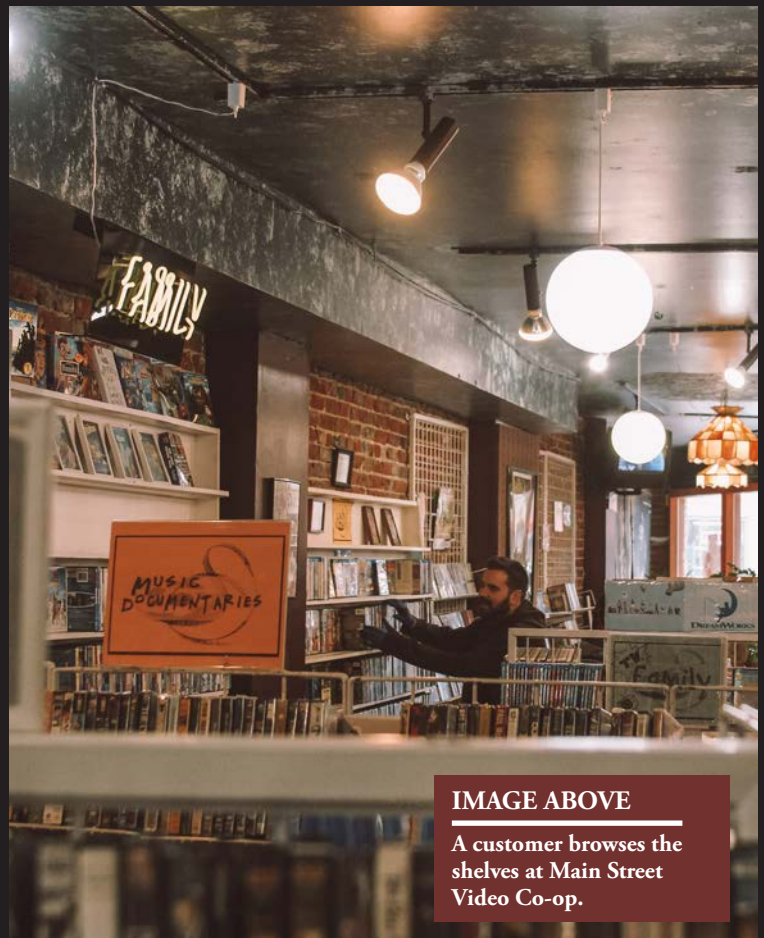
Now she said she no longer has this experience. Rather, she is stuck using streaming platforms such as Netflix for her movie needs.

“So there’s Netflix and Hulu and all those things now, and I do use them, but their algorithms suck,” Berge said. “You could just go (to the store) and actually find something new. It wasn’t a computer trying to recommend it to you. It was just you looking for what interested yourself without someone telling you what you’d like.”

Berge said going to the video store became a staple for her, and hopes there will be a new video store in Moscow sometime in the future.

Like Berge, other customers have rallied in support of the video store. Cooper Salmon hosts biweekly movie nights at home with his friends. He said the store was always his first place to get a movie, drawn to the high quality that streaming movies didn’t have.

“When you need good quality, you come to the



**IMAGE ABOVE**

A customer browses the shelves at Main Street Video Co-op.

Co-op,” Salmon said.

These are just two customers in the community who have been touched by the video store and there are many more. O’Rourke said, even after the store closed, he has continued to gain support for the store. He said community members would recognize him in public, giving their well wishes for the store.

“I remember a man telling me, ‘I really hope you make it.’ And then while we were standing there waiting, another person walked over and was kind of echoing the same sentiments, they’re like, ‘Oh, yeah, I love that store,’” O’Rourke said. “It’s nice to know that the community, kind of cared about this thing.”

He said he enjoyed community members visiting the store and seeing teenagers in Moscow grow up with the video store.

“I’d start to see these kids come in on their own, and they’d be like, ‘Oh, let’s look at some movies’ and then they’d come in with their friends, which is kind of nice seeing that happening again because I know that happened to me when I was a kid,” O’ Rourke said.

Love of movies and the video store doesn’t just end with customers, O’Rourke was just as passionate about the store.

“I’m just really thankful for the support,” O’Rourke said. “It really was a great place to work and I’m not taking it for granted.”

The manager has cared about the store ever since he started working there four years ago. He said working at the video co-op was his dream job.

“I guess I’ve just loved movies my whole life,” O’Rourke said. “So a job that I get paid to watch movies was pretty hard to turn down. If I was a little kid, I would go back and tell myself that one day I would be just watching movies all day.”

As a child, O’ Rourke took advantage of his own video store growing up.

“I remember going to video stores when I was a kid and that every single day after school, I would walk around the Hollywood Video and try to find something to watch,” O’Rourke said.

That love for movies has followed him in his career.

O’Rourke said even though he’s disappointed with the store closing, he is thankful for the legacy it was able to have.

“I’m really thankful that Moscow was an area that this place was able to thrive and survive for years. Like, way beyond what it should have been able to survive in,” O’Rourke said.

Berge said she has continued over the years to gush to people in Moscow, and those visiting, to go drop by the video co-op.

“If I meet someone who’s out of town, I’m like ‘have you been to the video rental?’ They look at me and they’re like ‘you have one of those?’ I say ‘it’s so good. They have everything,’” Berge said. “It was kind of a fit for Moscow with our unique, community, oriented town. I liked having it downtown. It was something that anyone could enjoy.”



Read Lindsay’s experience of writing her first and last story for Blot at [blotmagazine.com](http://blotmagazine.com).

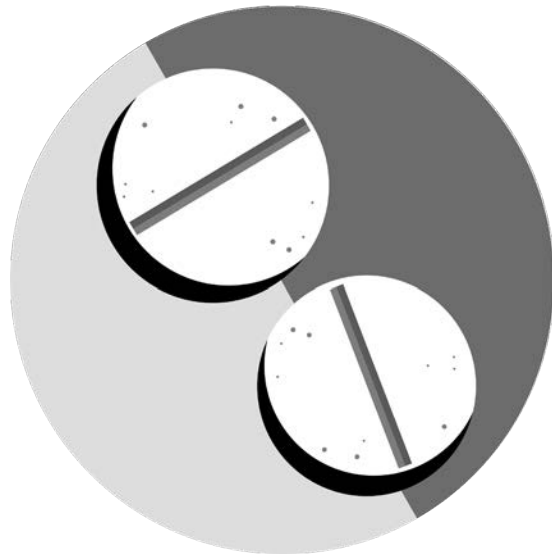


# A JOURNEY OF SELF-ACCEPTANCE

The experiences of living as a transgender individual in rural America

STORY BY  
ILLUSTRATIONS BY  
DESIGN BY

*Brianna Finnegan  
Riley Helal  
Lindsay Trombly*



Kade Warner has always felt like a man. It wasn't until his first day of kindergarten when he realized he was not perceived as one.

On that day, Warner, a transgender man from Mackay, Idaho, took a tour of the school. The teacher stopped the group in front of the boys' bathroom and asked if anyone had to go. Warner raised his hand and the teacher got upset, explaining that this was a boys' bathroom.

When Warner said he was a boy, his teacher responded, "No, you're not."

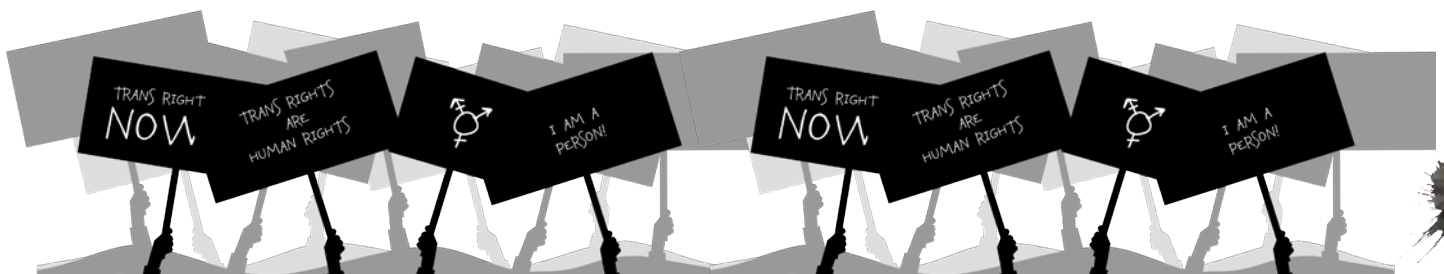
While every individual's experience is different, living as a transgender person in a rural area can be extremely difficult. Idaho recently passed two separate anti-transgender bills: House Bill 500, banning transgender women from playing on women's sports teams, and House Bill 509, preventing people from changing the gender on their birth certificate.

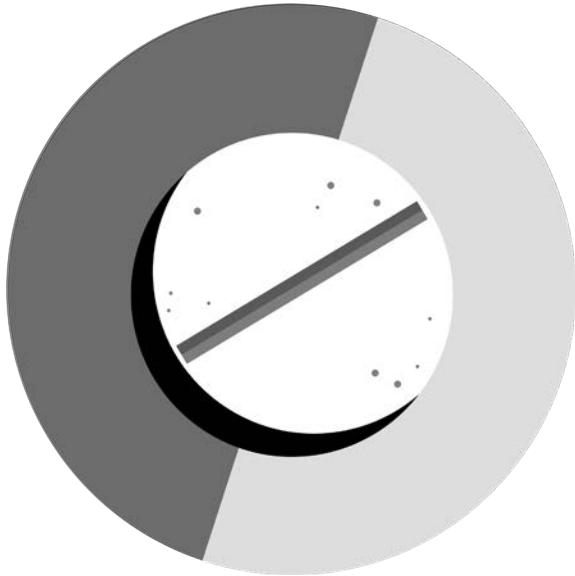
Not every transgender person in Idaho will be impacted by these bills, but many transgender community members share a concern over what message this sends to those living in their state.

## QUESTIONING

Athene Peterson, a transgender woman from Caldwell, Idaho, began questioning her gender at a young age after having dreams about being a girl. Despite coming from a generally accepting household, Peterson struggled with the gender ideology she'd been immersed in.

"I had strange ideas regarding both





masculinity and femininity,” Peterson said. “I became convinced that I was a bad person, or that I was a terrible person, for wanting to transition or even just thinking about anything in regards to being the other gender.”

In the process of coming out, Peterson struggled a lot with self-acceptance. She struggled with depression, eventually going on antidepressants to manage her symptoms.

“I think that was mostly just the result of being in my own head. That could’ve been from societal pressure or maybe from other family, I don’t really know why,” Peterson said. “It definitely made things a lot easier when I finally did transition, having an accepting household, but when I was trying to come out to myself fundamentally it was mostly just convincing myself and trying to get out of my own head.”

## BODY DYSMORPHIA

Many transgender people describe a sense of discomfort with their own body, known as body dysmorphia. It’s hard to explain to someone who hasn’t experienced it, but Mars Cantrell, a transgender man from Eugene, Oregon, says it’s similar to being stranded somewhere unfamiliar.

“It’s like you’ve somehow ended up in a foreign country,” Cantrell said. “You don’t speak the language, and you don’t have any currency and you don’t know anyone. You just feel really out of place and stuck, and you don’t know how to relate to the people around you, but in this really deeply personal way inside your own body.”

Cantrell said he always knew who he was and what he looked like, but never quite felt like the two matched up.

“There are these images you see of trans people, where there’s a woman looking into a mirror and seeing a man looking back out into the mirror and that’s kind of the opposite how I really felt,” Cantrell said. “It was more like knowing exactly what I looked like in this really, really deep way and feeling that it wasn’t right, feeling this extreme sense of discomfort.”





## COMMUNITY

Knowing you feel different and telling people about it are two very different things, and the community around an individual can play a huge role in the way they perceive themselves. Warner said this was one of the more difficult parts of his transition.

“Despite having all the stirrings and all the feelings my entire life, I buried it for the fear of losing all of my friends and family in the process,” Warner said. “It’s not that anybody ever really said or did anything to me — it was just the way they carried themselves around the whole topic.”

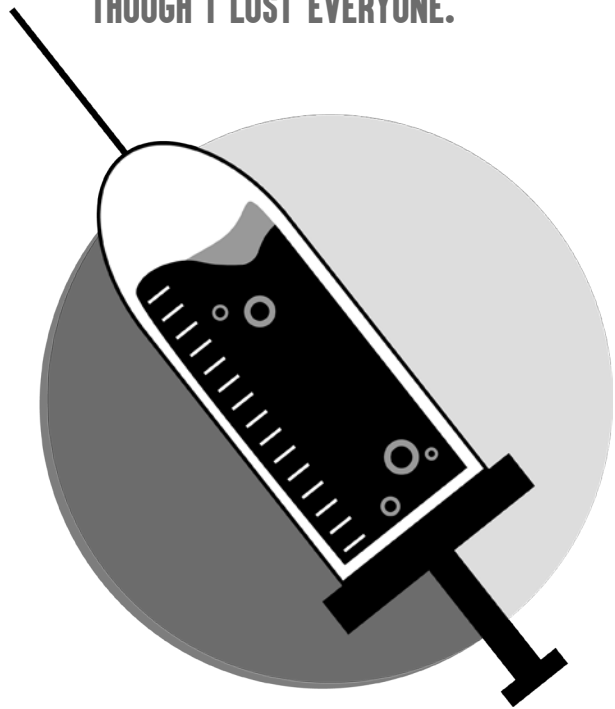
Warner said he felt uncomfortable with how the Mormon church he grew up in interacted with the topic of LGBTQA rights. Shortly after the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in favor of same-sex marriage, the topic came up at a Sunday service.

“(The bishop) spoke about it as in how we all needed to stay together and stay strong, despite what gay marriage equality would mean to the church and to its memberships,” Warner said. “He sounded as though some great big evil had been let in and we just had to hunker down and wait for it to be over.”

When Warner did come out to his family, it did not go over well. After coming out, Warner and his brother got into a physical altercation. Warner then left home and has not had much contact with his family since. Warner said while this process is painful, it has shown him who is truly by his side and looking out for his happiness.

“It’s something I definitely still think about every day. It’s hard to have to choose the people you care about, or your own happiness, and to not be able to have both,” Warren said. “Despite all the people who walked away, this was something I struggled with my whole life and I always knew this was who I was. And I’m far happier now even though I lost everyone.”

**“IT’S HARD TO HAVE TO CHOOSE THE PEOPLE YOU CARE ABOUT, OR YOUR OWN HAPPINESS, AND TO NOT BE ABLE TO HAVE BOTH. DESPITE ALL THE PEOPLE WHO WALKED AWAY, THIS WAS SOMETHING I STRUGGLED WITH MY WHOLE LIFE AND I ALWAYS KNEW THIS WAS WHO I WAS. AND I’M FAR HAPPIER NOW EVEN THOUGH I LOST EVERYONE.”**



**"IT FEELS LIKE YOUR WHOLE LIFE  
YOU'VE BEEN A LITTLE BIT SICK  
AND YOU JUST NEEDED A SHOT TO  
MAKE YOU FEEL BETTER."**



Cantrell, however, grew up seeing a larger LGBTQA community close to home. While he still struggled with figuring out how he identified, Cantrell said the community around him showed him he had options.

"My best friend, who I'm really close to, is a bisexual woman and she has a huge community of lesbian moms that I kind of ended up in the fold of. So even though I didn't really know older trans people, feeling that there were older queer people in my community living rich, complex lives, and who had gone through a lot of the same things that we were going through was deeply heartening," Cantrell said.

## **TRANSITIONING**

One of the biggest parts of transitioning is experimenting, Cantrell said. Every experience is different and requires the individual to try things out themselves.

Warner said one of the things that really helped him during his transition was hormone replacement therapy (HRT), a process of using hormone medication to replace the sex hormones naturally produced by the body. There are many forms of HRT, including pills, shots, gel and patches. Warner takes shots of testosterone.

"It feels like your whole life you've been a little bit sick and you just needed a shot to make you feel better," Warner said. "It felt like getting that final thing that I needed to fit my body just right and to feel good."

With the combination of HRT and surgery to remove his breasts, he has felt more able to take care of himself and to improve his physical and mental health.

"It's no secret that physical appearances affect our mental perceptions of ourselves," Warren said. "Having these things that help to confirm your feelings also helps you to treat yourself better mentally and physically. I eat better and definitely have a lot healthier thoughts."

But legislation in Idaho makes it difficult for transgender individuals to go through the process of transitioning on paper. And in addition to the two other anti-trans bills, Idaho attempted and failed to pass another bill that would make it possible for physicians treating transgender youth for gender dysphoria to be charged with a felony.





## LEGISLATION

Fran O'Farrell, a transgender person from Idaho, said they watch the faces of the people around them as they walk through the aisles of the grocery store. They evaluate the way other customers react as they walk by, evaluating how safe they are in each and every aisle. Even existing in public causes O'Farrell concern for their safety.

"Literally the entire state that I live in is willing to undermine my ability to be in the world right now," O'Farrell said. "When I meet someone or when I'm out in the world I'm constantly gauging how safe I am in that environment."

Cantrell said he has not been directly affected by these bills, but he knows people who are being affected and had they been passed earlier, he too would be impacted.

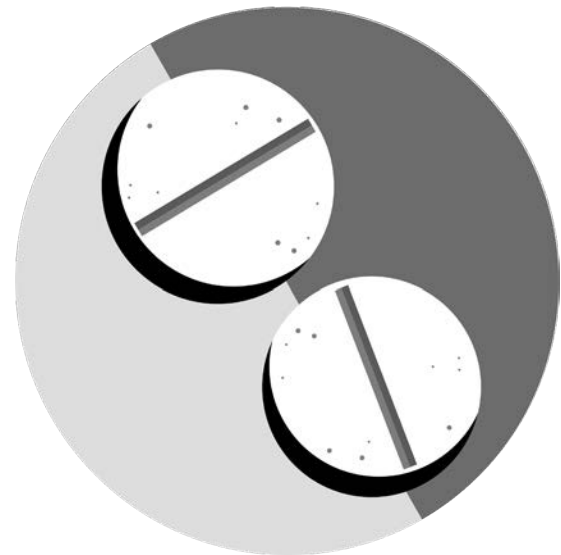
"The thought of being somewhere with this legislation when I was an athlete in school or before I changed my gender marker on my birth certificate, before I started hormones, it would be terrifying. It would be life-altering and potentially life-ending," Cantrell said.

Bills like these are showing the transgender community in Idaho the state actively doesn't want them, Peterson said. She feels these bills make it extremely difficult and unsafe for people trying to begin transitioning.

"You want to transition when you feel the most comfortable," Peterson said. "If you can't even feel safe within your own state it's really hard to transition because you're literally being threatened by the state."

O'Farrell said the process of transitioning has impacted the way they see others. The way people see them and treat them ultimately is a reflection on who they are.

"I am so acutely aware of the way I'm being perceived by other people," O'Farrell said. "It gives me a way of seeing them in reverse because I can feel the way they look at me. From there I can know the way they look at people in general and it allows a glimpse into their interiority."





# A right to vote

The importance of voting in 2020

STORY BY  
PHOTOS BY  
ILLUSTRATION BY  
DESIGN BY

Abby Fackler  
Abby Fackler  
Kristen Lowe  
Stevie Carr & Lindsay Trombly

In a nation of over 330 million people, it's easy to feel like your vote is insignificant — like you don't make a difference. However, after speaking with some politically active women within the Moscow and Boise communities, it's clear how impactful one vote can be. It can be a tool to empower women, and everyone, while commemorating the women who fought so hard to be given this right 100 years ago.

As a nation, we tend to put voting on the backburner. A study conducted by the Pew Research Center found that only 56% of registered voters in the United States cast a vote for the 2016 presidential election, meaning nearly half of the nation didn't vote.

In light of the current COVID-19 pandemic, this low turnout isn't looking like it's going to go up any time soon, with TIME Magazine reporting significantly lower voter turnout for the 2020 Democratic primaries.

This year marks 100 years since the 19th Amendment was ratified, providing white women the right to vote. Now, in the midst of a presidential election, we have the perfect opportunity to commemorate 100 years of women's suffrage — exercising the right to vote.

"People often feel very comfortable in their rights," Rebecca Scofield, a professor of 20th century American history at the University of Idaho, said. "It's important to remind people that it was not so very long ago that so few people could actually vote."

Due to the end of World War I, and in part due to the 1918 influenza pandemic, Scofield said, many people — including some women — in the early 20th century thought it was the wrong time to try and fight for suffrage, arguing that the United States needed to be just that — united. When many women continued to protest, they were often physically harmed by their opposers but they were just as often harassed and emotionally harmed.

"Mainly younger women, who had been born into this fight, were the ones that were willing to endure being called traitors, and people saying they weren't loyal or that they had their priorities out of order," Scofield said. "They were really the ones putting their





bodies on the line to make progress towards women's suffrage."

It's impossible to talk about the fight for women's suffrage in America without including those who were excluded from suffrage in 1920.

"African-American women of course are being excluded, but you also have Native American women who aren't even imagined as citizens until well into the 20th century," Scofield said.

After the Civil War, Scofield said, African-American women were still being excluded through segregation — and even after the 19th amendment was passed, there were still Jim Crow laws in place that prevented African-American women from voting.

Along with African-American women, Scofield said, Native American men and women were unable to vote, with the exception of Native men being allowed to vote in places like Idaho. This was on the condition that they adopted "habits of civilization," which basically meant they had to give up their religion, way of life, culture and language.

When Mexican-American women were granted American citizenship, they were often stripped of rights such as the right to property, the right to appear in court and, of course, the right to vote. These are just a few examples of the many groups throughout the United States that were disenfranchised.

Because of this, according to Scofield, a lot of the debates regarding what women's suffrage meant were initially from the perspective of white, middle class women, and tended to exclude many other groups.

Voting is something many women and other disenfranchised individuals fought so long and hard for. So why is it that so many people, namely young people, aren't voting?

"Boy if I had the answer to that one, we'd be making it happen," Susan Ripley, president of the League of Women's Voters Idaho, said.

Young people, according to Ripley, come out far more frequently for presidential elections as opposed to local elections. Even so, only 46.1% of 18 to 29-year-olds voted in the 2016 presidential election. This is the lowest turnout by an age group, according to the United States Census Bureau.

Grace Johnson, a politically active UI student, credits this low turnout in part to voter suppression. Voter suppression is a strategy used to discourage or prevent certain people from voting. Such discouragement can be exacerbated by how busy young people's lives are and feeling like their voices aren't heard.

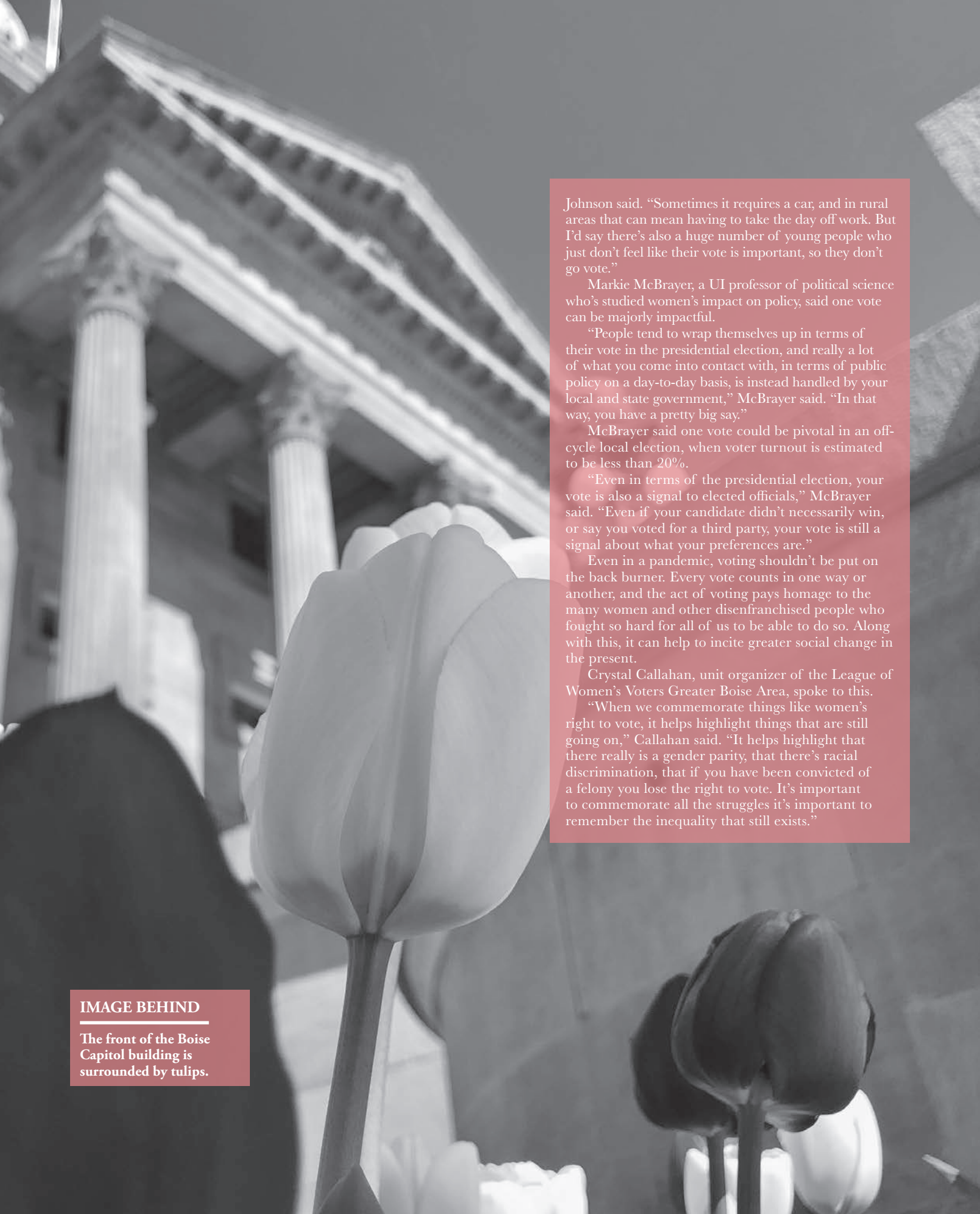
"If you are struggling financially and you're a college student, you may not have the time or resources to go vote,"



#### IMAGE BEHIND

The Idaho State Capitol is home to many visitors across the state.





Johnson said. “Sometimes it requires a car, and in rural areas that can mean having to take the day off work. But I’d say there’s also a huge number of young people who just don’t feel like their vote is important, so they don’t go vote.”

Markie McBrayer, a UI professor of political science who’s studied women’s impact on policy, said one vote can be majorly impactful.

“People tend to wrap themselves up in terms of their vote in the presidential election, and really a lot of what you come into contact with, in terms of public policy on a day-to-day basis, is instead handled by your local and state government,” McBrayer said. “In that way, you have a pretty big say.”

McBrayer said one vote could be pivotal in an off-cycle local election, when voter turnout is estimated to be less than 20%.

“Even in terms of the presidential election, your vote is also a signal to elected officials,” McBrayer said. “Even if your candidate didn’t necessarily win, or say you voted for a third party, your vote is still a signal about what your preferences are.”

Even in a pandemic, voting shouldn’t be put on the back burner. Every vote counts in one way or another, and the act of voting pays homage to the many women and other disenfranchised people who fought so hard for all of us to be able to do so. Along with this, it can help to incite greater social change in the present.

Crystal Callahan, unit organizer of the League of Women’s Voters Greater Boise Area, spoke to this.

“When we commemorate things like women’s right to vote, it helps highlight things that are still going on,” Callahan said. “It helps highlight that there really is a gender parity, that there’s racial discrimination, that if you have been convicted of a felony you lose the right to vote. It’s important to commemorate all the struggles it’s important to remember the inequality that still exists.”

#### IMAGE BEHIND

The front of the Boise Capitol building is surrounded by tulips.

# Color in darkness

## Nature brings light to the world in a difficult time

Even while we are quarantined during a pandemic, it's important to see the light and beauty that still exists in the world. This story was made for that. There's a rainbow of colors out there in nature and it's important to take a moment to look at it. Take a break from all the darkness and see the good that still exists in the world.

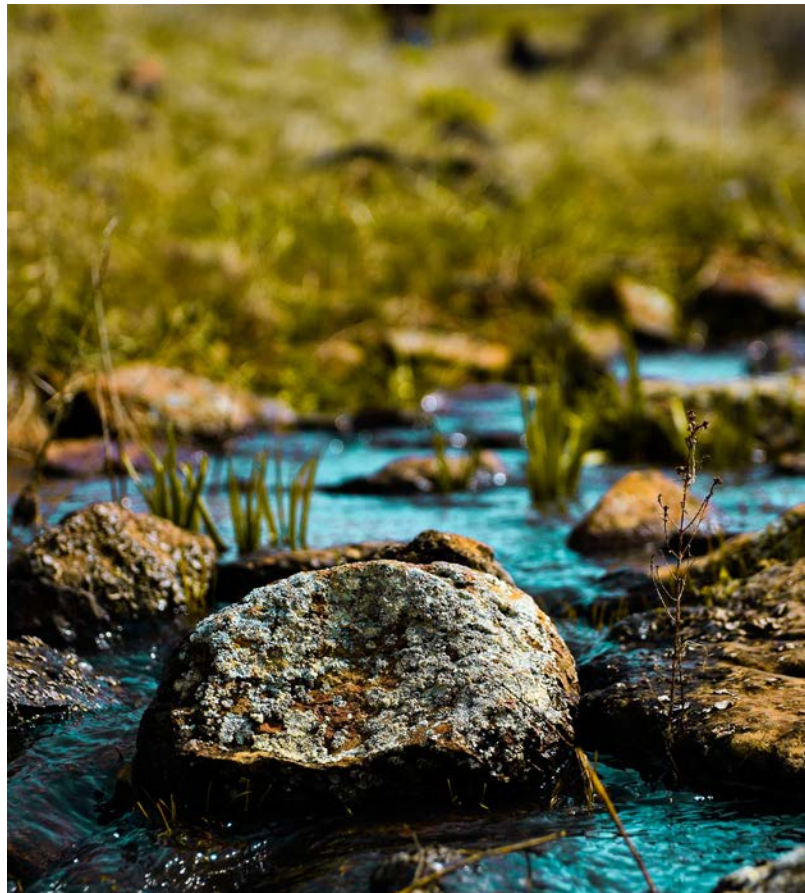
We found that for you in this story. We looked to the buds forming along the branches of cherry trees, the purple intensity of wildflowers just outside our door, and even the vibrant yellow of pollen nestled on the blooms of a willow branch.

These small things can be the positivity we need in our lives during this trying time. Take a breath, enjoy the simplicity of nature in these next few pages and clear your thoughts.

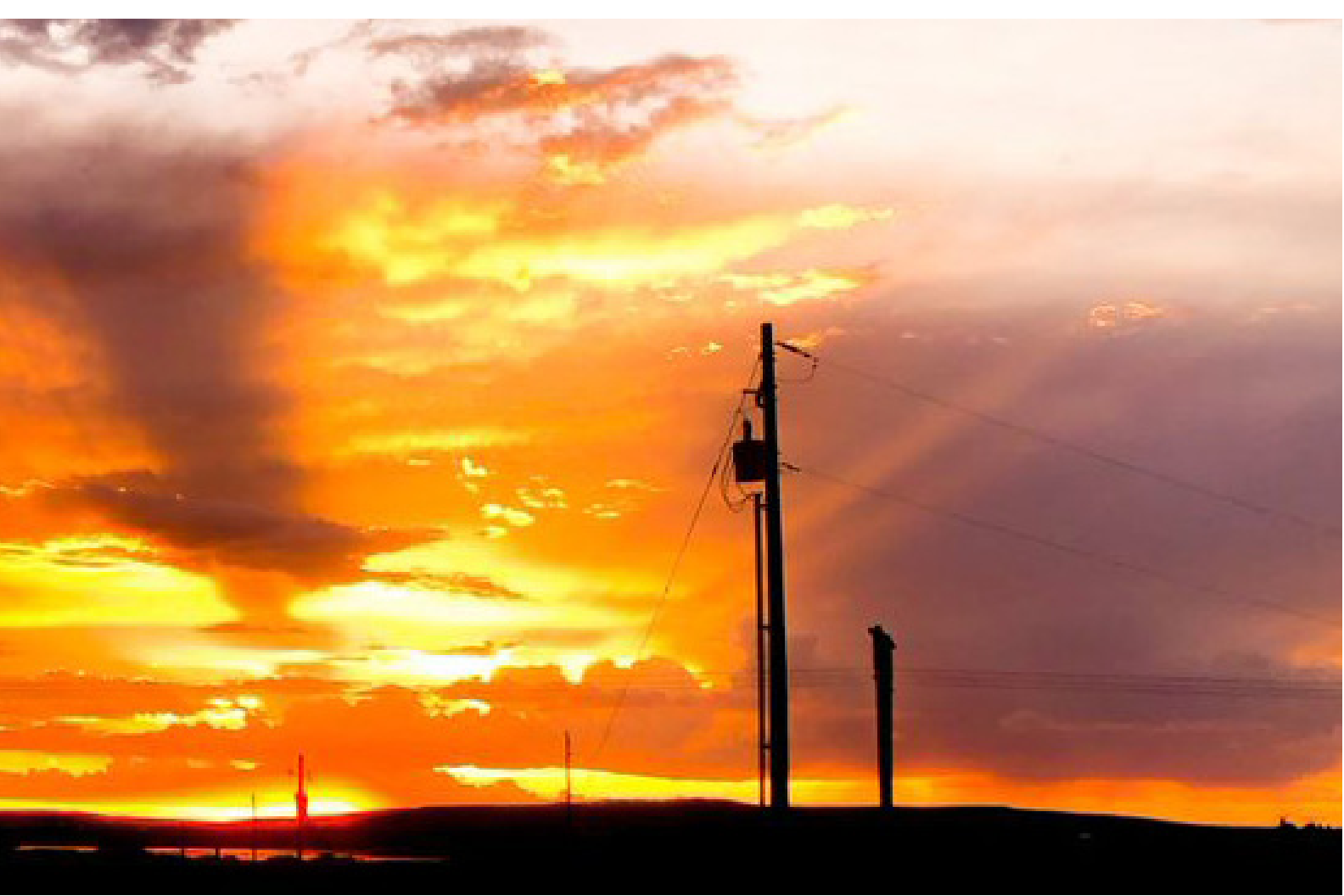
We hope you find that little bit of color, that little bit of happiness, in this story.

PHOTO STORY BY | *Cody Allred & Stevie Carr*  
DESIGN BY | *Lindsay Trombly*









See more of our color photo story at [blotmagazine.com](http://blotmagazine.com).



# Moon Lit Friend

POETRY BY  
ILLUSTRATION BY  
DESIGN BY

*Austin Emler*  
*Bonnie Lengele*  
*Bonnie Lengele*

Forever to be lost and alone.  
I travel down a path I know not where it goes.  
The trees become more and more bare  
The ground becomes less and less smooth.  
The only friend is the moon and his dimming light.  
I keep traveling on this path for the hope to see the sun again  
not wanting to go back on everything that has gotten me here.  
I am being pushed further and further down my damaged road.  
No one else is here with me, just me and the moon.  
I talk to the moon, but he does not answer back.  
He smiles down on me, out of mercy, I guess.  
I shall continue down this path until the day,  
the day the sun appears or my friend the moon,  
darkens his light too.



# THE BETTER PLAYER

FLASH FICTION BY  
ILLUSTRATION BY  
DESIGN BY

*Dylan Foster*  
*Bonnie Lengele*  
*Bonnie Lengele*

Sweat coated Aaron's hands as he gripped the controller. The adrenaline coursed through his veins like fire, and his heart pounded against his ribcage. His eyes darted across the screen, and his ears twitched, both straining to catch every minute movement. Both of his teammates were down, leaving him to face all three members of the enemy squad alone. One misstep and the game was over. Through the surround sound of his headset, he could hear the footsteps of the enemy coming closer. He could tell that they were somewhere in the cluster of short buildings and tight alleyways flanking the small field he couched in, but where would they emerge? All he could do was wait for them to appear, and hope that he shot first.

Movement: window.

Aaron's fingers twitched. The crosshair of his sniper scope flicked to the right with a smooth sharpness, and a single, sharp clap rang in his ears as he pulled the trigger. One down. He could hear the other two coming from his left. Too close to snipe. Aaron switched to his secondary weapon, a powerful revolver, and crouched behind the crate that was his only cover. His second opponent came sprinting out of an alley, but Aaron was ready for him. Three bullets to his enemy's head left only one standing. He immediately reloaded, but there were footsteps closing in behind him. Aaron turned on a dime and opened fire, but one bullet missed its mark.

Defeat.

Aaron put the controller down and slammed his fist on his desk.  
"Dammit."

He had been working for weeks to improve, but he still couldn't pull off the kind of clutch plays that his best friend, Jordan, seemed able to do with ease. Aaron knew that he was a strong player – his high placements in ranked play and his well above average stats proved that – but he still wasn't Jordan good. It shouldn't matter. After all, he wasn't trying to reach the pro level, or even close to it. But he was a competitive player, and so was Jordan. When they played, they played to win. Even though he knew that Jordan saw him as a good player, Aaron also knew that his friend didn't see him as an equal. He could see it in the way that Jordan took on fights alone rather than asking for help, and hear it in his unnatural silence when Aaron made the wrong movement, or missed his shots.

Aaron didn't want to be the best player. He wanted to be a player that Jordan respected. After all, he respected Jordan more than anyone. Aaron told himself that he would keep trying until he won that respect. Until Jordan started relying on him rather than making plays alone. Until he cheered Aaron's moves, instead of going silent to avoid criticizing them.

Aaron started another match.

"This time, I'll win," he demanded.

He didn't know that Jordan did things by himself because he was trying to prove to himself that he could. That the silences were out of frustration for having to rely on Aaron yet again.

Jordan started another match.

"This time, I'll win."







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