Included in this publication are the stories of 43 Idaho women who have been nominated as women making history. As part of Boise State University Women's History Month celebration, we find it not only important to understand the contributions of women that came before us, but also to hear the stories of the women who are making history now - ordinary women, leading extraordinary lives. Join in the celebration of their lives and how they have changed the lives of others. Then participate in activities throughout the city to celebrate and understand the contributions of women in our history.

Special Thanks to The Idaho Statesman for distributing this Boise State produced section.
BOISE STATE UNIVERSITY WOMEN’S CENTER

EDUCATION
The Clothesline Project with the WCA
Vagina Monologues
Women’s History Month
Take Back the Night
Academic Internships

SUPPORT SERVICES
Returning Women’s Mentoring Program
Relationship Support Group
Single Parent Club
Individual Consultation

THERE WERE MANY WOMEN WHO MADE A DIFFERENCE BUT DIDN’T MAKE IT INTO TRADITIONAL HISTORY BOOKS

THE WOMEN’S STUDIES PROGRAM AT BOISE STATE UNIVERSITY

Stay in touch with the Boise State Women’s Center

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Congratulations to the WOMEN in this publication
from the Boise State University Student Union & Activities

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Ada Community Library-Basque Museum and Cultural Center-Boise Art
Museum-Boise Public Library-Boise State Women’s Center-City Club of Boise-Discovery Center of Idaho-Idaho Black History Museum-Idaho Commission on the Arts-Idaho Hispanic Cultural Center-Idaho State Historical Museum-Idaho Human Rights Education Center-Idaho Shakespeare Festival-Idaho State Historical Society Library and Archives-Log Cabin Literary Center-Silver Sage Girl Scout Council
BECKY HAYS, Boise, Idaho

By Wendy Mercer: Wendy is a freshman honors student, who someday hopes to be a strong, positive influence on people, just as Becky is.

Becky Hays is an extraordinary woman. Hidden behind the quiet, modest exterior lies a soul of steel. She needed every ounce of that strength to fight breast cancer. Victorious, she now uses it to help others in their fight in life.

A couple of years ago, Becky Hays was a "normal" mom, working at the Idaho Department of Labor and enjoying activities like a pistol-shooting league, helping her stepson's Boy Scout troop, and being a part of the Western White Water Association. Then, one day she went in for a routine mammogram. What the radiologist found would change her outlook on life forever.

There were no lumps; instead, there were three tumors surrounding a calcification. She experienced a wide range of emotions: from astonishment to disbelief to acceptance and finally, determination to conquer the illness. In the weeks following, Becky had to make difficult decisions. She had to decide which investigative procedure to use, and when it was positive, whether to have a mastectomy or merely a lumpectomy performed. She chose a bilateral mastectomy; she would not be "hacked apart piece by piece." Her choice was fortunate; the surgeon found yet more tumors around the original three, and the cancer did not spread after surgery.

Her family was supportive of her during this difficult time. In addition to the stress of surgery, Becky had to face the stubbornness of her insurance company. It would not give its approval to her mastectomy before the surgery took place, even though the procedure was commonplace and often needed for victims of breast cancer. She literally called the company from the hospital right before it happened, arguing with the different representatives from the company. Finally the doctor told her that the company would pay, and immediately she was whisked away into the operating room.

In the midst of her struggles to fight cancer, she became involved with a breast cancer support group meeting at the Meridian St. Luke's hospital. Here she felt accepted; these women were going through the exact same thing she was experiencing. She continues to go to group now even though her breast cancer has disappeared; she wants to support others in their fight. Every Monday at 6:30 pm they meet to discuss their struggles and the pain surrounding the illness, in hopes to support each other.

After her cancer went into remission Becky did not stop at merely helping those already afflicted. She became an ardent supporter of Race for the Cure, a women's race for the support of breast cancer research. Captain of the team "Hikin' for Healthy Hooters" (not associated with the restaurant chain Hooters, she has motivated over 500 people to participate in the Race. She helps with the office work of the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation (which sponsors the race), and gives many hours of her time to raising breast cancer awareness throughout the country.

As Wendy Matlock, executive director of the foundation notes, Becky has "instilled a team spirit and given special meaning to the national race theme: 'celebrating the strength of one and the power of many to change the world.'"

For those who go through the trauma of breast cancer, Becky is a shining light of hope. She urges those fighting cancer not to look at it as a fight against death, but a chance to realize the importance of life every day. Life is precious; it might end soon, but that is no reason to waste it by worrying.

Her own struggle has inspired her to leave her comfort zone and reach out to others. By assisting with Race for the Cure, she supports those still fighting breast cancer and helps future generations of women in their struggle against the age-old killer. Becky truly is a remarkable woman.

LEACADIA POWELL, Boise, Idaho

By Tam Dinh: As the coordinator of Boise State's Cultural Center, Tam provides educational opportunities for students and the community to experience the rich cultures that make up Boise.

Poised. Confident. Beautiful. Definitely the epitome of a successful woman and by anyone's standard, Leacadia's achievements in her professional and personal life are worthy of recognition. She earned a bachelor's degree in marketing from Howard University in Washington, DC. After a short stint in modeling and designing, she was introduced to the corporate world after a career counselor noticed she had "people skills" and suggested that she go into sales. She went to three sales interviews, and right away she was offered all three jobs. From then on, it was one adventure after another as one company after another vied for her employment. She has worked for many major companies such as Honeywell, Kodak, Xerox, Compaq, and now Hewlett-Packard.

Even though her success in the corporate world is to be admired and maybe envied by some, Leacadia does not see her success as an indication of her optimal achievement. She admits that there is another side to her that is very much an opposite of her corporate image. She sometimes feels very torn, for there is "an artist screaming to get out!" She wishes that she had more time to devote to her artistic side. Leacadia channels her creativity into her arts and crafts. Her artistic ability spans from making candles to jewelry to wedding gowns. Her dream is to one day open a boutique where her beautiful things she creates.

PHYLISS SMITH, Caldwell, Idaho

By Kim Marie Niemiec: Kim is a senior at Boise State University, studying creative nonfiction writing. She has served the women's center in a variety of ways: as a mentor for returning women students and newsletter producer.

On April 7, 2001, Phyllis Smith's life was forever changed. Her seventeen-year-old son and his best friend were killed in a one-car rollover crash. In the aftermath of the investigation of the accident, it became apparent that neither her son nor his best friend was wearing a seatbelt. According to Phyllis, Idaho spent $300,000 to educate the public about the importance of wearing a seatbelt. However, Phyllis had always warned her children about the dangers of riding in a car without a seatbelt, and she knows firsthand that education isn’t enough. In response to her tragic loss, Phyllis began the painstaking research to determine how motor vehicle related deaths could be prevented. She learned that wearing a seatbelt is the most effective way to prevent death in a motor vehicle crash and that the state of Idaho has one of the weakest seatbelt laws in the country. She also found that seatbelt use in Idaho is among the lowest in the
nation with less than sixty percent of Idahoans wearing their seatbelts. Phyllis decided that it was time for the law to change.

Intelligent, articulate and to the point, Phyllis is a woman with a mission, her purpose clear, her strength inexcusable. She is the creator of "SAFE," an organization that stands for Seatbelt Awareness for Everyone. With the help and support of about thirty students from Middleton High School who were friends with her son, Phyllis has initiated a powerful grassroots movement to change the current seatbelt laws in the state of Idaho. Most of her young supporters are members of The Middleton Muscle Club, who often drag race at Firebird Raceway.

Together with Phyllis, they bought a 1969 Camaro, "the kind of car that kids just ogle over," which happened to be her son's favorite car, and painted in his best friend's favorite color, bright orange. The car was made into a memorial with the words, "In Loving Memory" with both boys names painted on the back. Phyllis and her group of young supporters began participating in parades in Idaho, using the car to raise awareness that "if you don't wear a seatbelt, "this can happen to you." The kids walk beside the car handing out information and statistics to the public.

Another aspect of Phyllis's campaign to raise seatbelt awareness has been to travel around the state with some of the kids, speaking to driver's training programs about the necessity of wearing a seatbelt. "Now we're using peer pressure, kids telling kids," says Phyllis. Phyllis and her daughter have done public service announcements on the radio and a video was made at the crash site with Phyllis and her young supporters. They are also being booked on a regular basis for school-wide presentations. They have spent their weekend evenings downtown, holding up signs for cruisers, warning them of the dangers of not wearing a seatbelt. To cover the costs of their efforts, they sell t-shirts and hold raffles. "These kids have taken off work and have sacrificed a lot of personal time in their efforts to support seatbelt awareness," says Phyllis.

Her tireless efforts also include visits with state Senators Robert Geddes and John Goedde, in her push for the passage of primary seatbelt legislation. This means that a person can be stopped for not wearing a seatbelt just as they can for having a broken taillight. As a generalist, Margie works with the whole picture and the whole person, helping in all aspects of student issues, whether it is problems with financial aid; academic problems or personal problems.

Margie's position is not without challenges. "Students today at Boise State University are often students who work, who are struggling financially, and many don't live on campus and tend to be isolated. I'm trying to help them connect to the University, to have a quality college experience that encompasses all the growth and development that comes outside the classroom as well as inside."

However, challenges are nothing new to Margie. When she was six years old, she contracted polio. She spent almost a year in a rehabilitation center and upon returning home, attended a school for children with disabilities for two years. Physical therapy was a part of her daily routine. Overcoming polio was one of the greatest achievements of her life and Margie believes that "the reason she can walk today is because of the sacrifice and dedication of her parents."

At the age of twelve, she worked for a horse trainer named Toby. This experience had a tremendous impact on her life: "He was a gruff old horse trainer and I was half afraid of him. I started riding a horse that was probably too much for me at the time, but I was more afraid of him than I was of the horse." Toby taught her the value of challenging herself. "Students today at Boise State University are often students who work, who are struggling financially, and many don't live on campus and tend to be isolated. I'm trying to help them connect to the University, to have a quality college experience that encompasses all the growth and development that comes outside the classroom as well as inside."

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Animals have since played an important role in her life. At age fifty, she was diagnosed with breast cancer. The day after she got the news, she and her husband took their horses out for a ride. "When I ride into the mountains on my horse, with my dogs trailing at my side, I feel a strong sense of reconnection. It's all a very sensual experience to me; the smell of the animal, the feel of the leather, the feel of the movement of the horse beneath me, the sound of the hoof beats as they go across the rocks. After the ride with my husband I said, "O.K., I can do this."

Margie survived breast cancer, but her chemotherapy treatments have caused permanent damage to her heart. However, her spirit remains unscathed. As she reflects on her personal challenges, Margie says, "This has just reminded me again of how close to that line we all walk. Once things get back into balance, you don't think about it everyday but you do understand what it is that people deal with. I do think that having gone through the challenges that I have has given me a genuine interest in assisting college students who are overcoming difficulties. This understanding has proven to be a valuable asset in her work at the university. Students don't just pick up that catalog and take all those classes in the program the way it says," says Margie. "Like John Lennon said: 'Life is what happens to people when their busy making other plans.'" She also believes that one of her greatest tools is a sense of humor and "the ability to laugh at the day, to laugh at oneself and not to take this world too personally."

On a personal level, Margie's greatest achievement has been raising two sons, which she readily shares half of the credit with her husband. "They are cooler than shit," she says with a wide grin and a twinkle in her eye. They care about the environment, human rights, and they both expect to be with women who are their own person."

On a professional level, Margie's hard work has not gone unrecognized by her colleagues. She recently chaired a regional conference for NASPA (The National Association of Student Personnel Administration), creating a more relaxed, accepting and warm atmosphere, setting a model that conferences have continued to follow. She also received the TWN award, (Tribute to Women in Industry) from the Boise Women's and Children's Alliance. Boise State has been awarded with a tremendous gift in Margie VanVooren, generalist at large, who is a great example of what it means to be a human being and how to make the most of it.
ALEXIS HIGDON and KATH’REN BAY
Boise, Idaho
By Kim Marie Niemiec

It all began with two women with a vision: "an old fashioned, comfortable, state-of-the-art, feline practice." Today that vision is a reality. On the corner of Ustick and Maple Grove sits a charming yellow house with flower boxes on the windowsills, huge pine trees, and a meticulously manicured lawn. If it weren't for the sign that says, "The Cat Doctor Veterinary Hospital and Hotel," I might think that I had arrived at a quaint bed and breakfast.

"The Cat Doctor" reflects the brains and brawn of Alexis Higdon DVM, and Kath’ren Bay, two striking women in their fifties. Kath’ren’s background is in public relations and management and Alexis, at the ripe young age of forty-five, was the oldest woman veterinary graduate at Washington State University in 1993.

They opened their doors to the public in May 1997, and now are the proud owners of a tremendously successful practice. However, it wasn’t easy. Although the road to success was filled with many obstacles, their hard work and dedication paid off. "The thing is, you have a dream, you have a vision. You have to be willing to pay the price for it and stick with it and the reward will come," says Kath’ren.

Kath’ren and Alexis did their homework long before their practice was realized. They were both living in Seattle when they decided to start their own practice. They studied the demographics of Washington, Oregon, and Idaho and determined that Boise was the perfect place for "The Cat Doctor." Within our city, anyone with good business sense knows the importance of location, location, location. Kath’ren and Alexis once again did their homework and found the ideal location, where they found property for sale.

Then came a series of hurdles that seemed insurmountable. They only needed the front part of the three-acre site. However, their realtor told them that the elderly woman who owned it would never break it up. Did this stop them? Absolutely not. Kath’ren and Alexis took matters into their own hands and drove right into the woman’s driveway, knocked on her door and shared their vision with her. Within an hour, she agreed to break up the property for them. They, in turn, promised to enhance her lifelong home and make it an asset to the neighborhood.

The next day brought another challenge; Boise’s planning and zoning division told them that "this side of Ustick is residential and the neighborhood plans are carved in stone. It’s as rare to change this as a blue moon." However, after considerable research, Alexis was able to convince the review committee that what they wanted to do would have less impact on the area than an allowable apartment complex — and looking at the calendar, that day just happened to fall on a blue moon.

Then came another major obstacle; planning and zoning called again and said that if the property had been split after 1960 it could not be split again. After searching through archive after archive, Kath’ren finally found the deed that proved that it had been split before 1960.

In the meantime, Kath’ren and Alexis had to obtain financing. "We naively thought this would be a simple matter," says Kath’ren. The first eight banks turned them down. But like a cat with nine lives, their determination paid off. The last bank they met the ninth banker (who just happened to be a woman), who understood their vision and arranged the loan.

"Here we were, we didn’t even have paper clips, nothing to start a hospital with," recounts Kath’ren. With all their budgeted money gone to construction surprises, they rotated credit cards to pay off balances and got leases for equipment. After ten months from the time they had set their eyes on the place, they opened "The Cat Doctor" with ten dollars in the bank.

They soon found themselves in demand. By living in the employee lounge for two years and putting every dime back into the business, they have since paid off every start-up loan and lease. Their staff has grown to ten full-time and five part-time employees, including three more veterinarians.

The aesthetics of the premises, from the 50-year-old hardwood floors, to the cat library that enables clients to check out books to learn more about their cat, reflects the warmth and care that Kath’ren and Alexis have put into their practice.

Being firm believers in giving back to the community, they insist on paying their employees a living wage and offer full benefits to all employees. Once a month, Alexis and her staff volunteer to spay and neuter cats from some of the local non-profit organizations that foster and find homes for street cats. The property itself is so delightfully pleasing to the eye, that it greatly enhances the beauty of the neighborhood.

Reflecting on their success, Kath’ren says, "Don’t you just love it, two old women without a pot to piss in five years ago? Yes, we do love it. Kath’ren and Alexis are an inspiration to anyone with a vision, who dares to follow it."

PENNIE S. COOPER, Nampa, Idaho
By Katie Mills: Katie is a senior, majoring in English at Boise State. She has served as a student ambassador and works in the student union.

Pennie Cooper went to college at the University of Iowa to become a nurse, because no one ever told her she could be a doctor. However, she soon discovered that nursing was not a profession she wanted to pursue, so Pennie went back to school to get her bachelor's degree in sociology. Pennie enjoyed her sociology and social work classes, but didn’t know what she wanted to do after college was over. Fate took over when one of her classmates offered her a job at the Iowa security medical facility, working with those considered "criminally insane." She was the first female social worker in the prison's history, and worked out of an office that was a former cell. Some of the inmates had been in the facility for over sixty years and had been subjected to such medical practices as lobotomies. The ones that could function well, however, were extremely protective of Pennie and the other female staff, and the women would often play softball with them during the lunch hour. During her time at the prison, Pennie saw the facility change from being part of the main prison to becoming a separate facility. She was also responsible for developing policies for the new program. It was Pennie's first job out of college, and over the short
were in high school, but those turns of events have proved to
time she was there, Pennie felt she learned more about herself
then she did about any of the inmates.

Pennie left Iowa after two years, and moved to Texas
to pursue a job as a social worker, then moved back to Iowa
to do graduate work in law enforcement. However, she cut
her academic life short to return home to care for her father,
who was very ill. Pennie did not choose to go back to work
directly, but instead stayed at home for a while. "After a year
I got tired of being a housewife," she said with a smile. Back
in the work force she started on a path that would eventually
take her to Idaho.

In 1977 Pennie became the chief of the bureau of
medical services for the Iowa department of human services.
Her boss moved to Idaho in 1979 and noted the problems
with the systems that were in place. He offered her a job in
Boise, and she became the chief of the bureau of benefit
payments, where she managed funds for both Medicaid and
welfare. "My husband is a real planner. I take what comes
along," Pennie said. After working in the private sector as a
consultant, Pennie eventually took a job as the executive
director for the Idaho state council for the deaf and hard of
hearing. "When I took the job I didn't realize I would be
working by myself for six and a half years," she said with a
laugh. Pennie had continually taken voluntary pay cuts and
has refused raises in order to see the program succeed.

Through her work in the agency, a system has been
put in place to test all newborn children for hearing problems.
Because of Pennie's hard work, "98% of all Idaho children are
now being screened at birth and those children who are
identified with hearing loss can now receive the services needed
to assure that they develop language at a normal pace."

Pennie Cooper has done quite a bit in her life, and
has accomplished much. She is part of the Rotary Club in
Boise, and helped found the City Club of Boise, an organization
that brings in speakers with the purpose of encouraging civic
debate. She never forgets about those who may need her. She
is always willing to put her professional life on pause to help
those close to her when they are in need. Pennie's life may
not have turned out the way she thought it would when she
was in high school, but those turns of events have proved to
benefit Idaho citizens, especially the children, who have better
opportunities because of her.+

ZEDA JAMES, Boise, Idaho

By Amber Armstrong: Amber is an English major with a writing emphasis and
is looking forward to graduation in May 2002.

Almost ten years ago, Stephanie Tucker, the original
 coordinator of Soul Food Extravaganza, asked Zeda James
to cook a dish for the very first festival - baked mac & cheese
and fried chicken. Soul Food Extravaganza, an event that
raises awareness about the contributions of African Americans
in the community, began as a small gathering and has grown into
a major event that draws more than 5,000 people. In a
city with so few African Americans, Zeda believes such events
build community and emphasize the belief that "differences
should be appreciated."

In 1977 James became a part-time, full-time, and
founded Boise, and helped found

Zeda, currently one of six coordinators for the festival,
is responsible for publicity, securing a park for the event,
booking entertainers, merchandise vendors, and food vendors.
This year marks its 10th anniversary, and Zeda is hopeful that
her work will draw at least 10,000 participants. Soul food is made from the soul and the heart.

According to Zeda, every nationality has some sort of
food; in the U.S., soul food's history mirrors the history of
slaves, when people had very little to eat and made do with
what they had and never wasted anything. Zeda has been
cooking soul food since she was ten years old. These meals,
that require a lot of time to prepare, can include large amounts
of food such as catfish, cornbread, biscuits, black-eyed peas,
mustard greens, collard greens, turnips, fried chicken, and
sweet potato pie.

While Zeda's work touches the lives of many people,
like so many community leaders, she doesn't always see the
tangible fruits of her labor. However, during one celebration,
she recounts a particularly moving experience. She was near
a ticket booth for the event when a woman stopped her; she
had something for Zeda. This woman, who Zeda had never
seen before and still does not know, gave her a bag that
contained a Santa Clause doll, then told her how much she
appreciated her work. She felt touched and surprised that a
total stranger would honor her this way.

However, not all of Zeda's experiences have been so
touching. About 30 years ago, on a trip to North Carolina to
visit family, she was told that her children could not use
the restroom at a gas station because there were no "colored
restrooms." She was even followed and watched closely in
stores. She stayed a week and has never returned, save a short
visit; she could not tolerate the racism that was displayed
towards her and her family.

Zeda grew up in a racially diverse neighborhood
where differences of race were not pointed out. However,
during the 1960's, when riots broke out in New York due to
visible inequities in employment, housing and opportunities,
Zeda was introduced to racism in our country. As a teenager,
she didn't quite understand why people were burning their
own homes; through inquiries with her family she realized
they were in poor condition and could not compare to the
homes of others, who, with a mainstream society. She
remembers the mother of one of her friend's getting shot
randomly while she was at home looking out a window. These
events impacted Zeda's life forever. She wanted to learn more
about black history and why things happened the way they
did. Zeda possesses a deep honor and respect of those women
that came before her. She stresses that today's African American
women get their strength through the women who grew up in
slavery. Without their sacrifices, hardships, and perseverance,
Zeda believes that she would not be where she is today.

When Zeda first came to Boise in the 1970's, with
so few African Americans living here, she initially felt isolated.
However over time, she became confident that she had made
the right decision. She still has to work twice as hard to
teach her children their culture since they grew up in a
predominantly white area. But these experiences have helped
her learn how to welcome new African Americans at Hewlett
Packard, where she is an administrative assistant. She promptly
introduces herself, gives them her phone number, and offers
answers about Boise if they have any questions. Her empathy
and actions help dissolve the feelings of isolation that others
may feel.

Zeda is proud to be an African American woman.
She is proud to have reached the status she has and likes
to think that there are slaves in heaven looking down on her with
pride. Zeda is involved in many more diversity works, which
includes work on Martin Luther King, Jr. Human Rights

JUANDALYNN TAYLOR, Moscow, Idaho

By Jeannie Harvey, Director, UI Women's Center; Jeannie loves Latin and
Caribbean dance, lived in Jamaica, and finds any excuse to travel. Jeannie also
teaches women's studies, and is adjunct faculty in the department of sociology.

Moving, moving. Dr. Juandalynn Taylor is on the
move. And, she is fast. Since arriving at the University of
Idaho, she has quickly become involved in campus,
community, and statewide activities. She visited Idaho for
the first time in November 2000, during the first snowstorm
of that year. And, for a Texan, that was brutal. Yet, she
returned in January of 2001 as a visiting professor in the
communications department.

Her portfolio of activities soon broadened to include
assisting the Office of Diversity & Human Rights. Then,
in September, Juandalynn took the position of Interim
Director for the Office of Multicultural Affairs. In addition
to her administrative role on campus, she also teaches a class
called, "Race, Class and the Media" at the UI. In her short
time in Idaho she has made an impression on many of us for
her get-things-done attitude. Prior to joining the UI faculty,
Juandalynn taught at Xavier University of New Orleans,
Louisiana, the University of Texas at Arlington and Huston-
Tillotson College. The chance to work on diversity issues
drew Juandalynn to the University of Idaho. Since arriving
in Idaho, she has participated in many aspects of the
University's diversity programs, including a Scripps-Howard
Multicultural Journalism Workshop held last summer. The
participants of this workshop were high school students of
color who have an interest in print and broadcast journalism.

As an African American woman, she feels she can
lead the way for African Americans and other minorities.
This fall, she brought Oscar de la Torre to campus. Mr. de
la Torre is a teacher and community activist working with
gang youth in Los Angeles. He gave the keynote address
at a reception for diversity scholarship winners, the first time
for this event. The reception was an idea Juandalynn turned
into a reality.

Last summer she assisted the Office of Diversity
and Human Rights as they began development of diversity
plans within divisions across campus. As a leader within the
College of Letters and Science's diversity task force, she, along
with others, coordinated a survey of faculty about diversity
issues then developed a report and diversity action plan for the
college. This effort became a model for other colleges on campus.

Sonya Rosario, her nominator and Executive
Director of the Women of Color Alliance (WOCA), first
met Juandalynn at a Caesar Chavez celebration where they
quickly learned of their mutual interest in women's issues, especially women of color in Idaho. Juandalynn eagerly joined Idaho's WOCA and was soon involved with women's issues at a state level as a member of their advisory board. Sonya describes Juandalynn as a "teacher and human rights activist (who) stands out...a thinker out of the box, never to take the easy way of learning...an incredible asset to the University of Idaho as well as to the WOCA." Juandalynn earned her Ph.D. at the University of Texas, Austin. Her dissertation examined media coverage of Cuban and Haitian immigration and public policy issues. She has studied popular culture in Brazil in addition to other research interests, which include Black Generation X identity construction and intercultural communication in college classrooms. Her broad interests have taken her to different regions of the Americas. She traveled to Cuba and the Dominican Republic in the Caribbean. And to pursue her interest in popular culture in Brazil, she traveled to Salvador, Brazil. Although we don't want to add to her busy schedule, some of us are hoping that Juandalynn will teach one of our hobbies: Brazilian dance, or samba. She has practiced ballet since she was young and was a member of her university's dance troupe. To keep active and fit, she teaches aerobics in addition to other Latin dances.

Juandalynn Taylor is an inspiration to many of us for her ability to make things happen. Sonya describes Juandalynn as "dedicated, an excellent listener and observer, human rights activist, a leader, a thinker." I would add visionary to that list. Juandalynn has the vision to imagine what is possible, and then she knows how to work to achieve that vision making her mark in history. She will certainly succeed in moving others along with her. 

JUSTICE CATHY SILAK, Boise, Idaho
By Melissa Winstead: Originally from Ohio, she serves as the coordinator of the Boise State women's center. She earned her bachelor's in English from Miami University and her master's in higher education from the University of Georgia.

Cathy Silak is a woman who cherishes history and reflects on her own with a quiet and matter-of-fact demeanor. She grew up in Queens, New York and attended New York University where she earned her bachelor's degree in French literature and sociology. While at Harvard where she earned a master's in city planning, she took her first law class when a professor noticed her talents and encouraged her to take a class. Cathy found that law was "a language [she] could speak." It offered an established structure or a framework within which to operate and solve problems, an aspect of law that she loves. From there, she earned her law degree from the University of California at Berkeley School of Law, and a master of law degree from the University of Virginia.

Cathy Silak is currently practicing law and serves as a partner at Hawley Troxell Ennis & Hawley, Idaho's oldest and largest law firm. Justice Silak served on the Idaho Court of Appeals from 1990 to 1993 and on the Idaho Supreme Court from 1993 to December 2000. Prior to being appointed by former Governor Cecil Andrus as the first woman member of the Idaho Court of Appeals in 1990, Justice Silak was associate general counsel at Morrison Knudsen Corporation (now Washington Group International). She was recently appointed for a two-year term to the American Judicature Society's board of directors -- a nonpartisan organization with national membership of judges, lawyers and non-legally trained citizens interested in the administration of justice. Justice Silak has been admitted to the bar in Idaho (1983), in California (1977), and in the District of Columbia (1979).

Two of her most historic roles came into being after former Governor Cecil Andrus became familiar with her outstanding work and reputation for the law, and "because of her vast background and experience" he appointed her to the Court of Appeals and then to the Supreme Court. Justice Silak "is an intelligent woman, and one of the finest trial lawyers we'll ever know," declares Governor Andrus. "She served the state in an excellent capacity regardless of political consequences, proving to the world that a woman can serve as a Supreme Court justice in a manner that put most male lawyers to shame. With a broad understanding and sensitivity of people, she is always willing to serve the people and the broader good, beyond serving a single client."

While her resume is formidable, Justice Silak is a warm, approachable person that is involved in her community beyond her contributions to our system of law. She places the utmost value on her husband, Nicholas G. Miller and her three children, Hartley, Martha and Michael. Just mentioning her name to people who know her solicits an energetic response that shows they are proud to call her a friend, colleague or acquaintance. The glowing faces and charged voices echo a consistent message of respect and honor. As Jim Everett, director of the Boise Family YMCA, notes, "Cathy is the one of the classiest people I know."

Justice Silak is a founding member of the Idaho Coalition for Adult Literacy and currently serves as an advisory board member of the Learning Lab. She is on the board of the Boise Family YMCA, and is a current member and immediate past chair of the Idaho YMCA Youth Government Statewide Committee. A recipient of a 1998 Service to Youth Award from the Boise Family YMCA, she is also an advisory board member of United Way Success by Six.

Everett is particularly excited about the contributions that Justice Silak made with the Youth Government program that allows more than 1,500 young people in the state to conduct mock hearings and learn more about our system of government. "Through her unique style of leadership, Cathy was able to build on the successes of her predecessors," Everett notes. "She was able to build consensus and bring people together to strengthen the program."

Everett goes on to note, "Cathy serves as an exceptional role model to everyone, but especially to young women. She balances the roles of being a tremendous state leader with her abilities to be a great mom and her value of broader good, beyond serving a single client."

Along with her messages about political involvement, she challenges us to "stretch [our] limits" and to find courage to try new things; otherwise we stop "growing and learning."

And finally, "care for those you love and those who love you. It is easy to get caught up in work...strive for balance. It is an act of will at times to stay connected, but we cannot neglect the core elements of life."

Cathy Silak is an inspirational woman of character, whose achievements are too great to list. Suffice it to say that she is an "outstanding individual who has a unique ability to mix parental nurturing with the law," notes Governor Andrus. "She is an outstanding public servant whom the state owes a great debt."

Marilyn Watts, Idaho Falls, Idaho
By Janis McCarry: Janis, a native Boisem, has worked for Boise State University for 14 years as a management assistant in the Auxiliary Services Department. Janis writes fiction and has completed two contemporary romance novels and is working on her third, a historical romance.

Someone forgot to tell Marilyn Watts that in the 1950's a woman couldn't do just anything she wanted. According to her daughter, Beth, Marilyn "defined all the conventional roles of her time, without being antagonistic or condescending. She was adventurous. She was independent. She was definitely hardheaded, but she was caring." Defying cultural convention, she always pursued her passions.

After graduating from nursing school, Marilyn and two friends found jobs in Sitka, Alaska working in a government-run tuberculosis (TB) hospital. At that time, TB was rampant in the little fishing village, and indeed, all over Alaska. Marilyn was assigned to the children's orthopedic ward where children with bone TB came from all over the territory. It was also in Alaska where she met her husband of 45 years, Steve.

Marilyn Watts established the first hospice care facility in southeastern Idaho in her adopted hometown, Idaho Falls in 1980. The administrator of the long-term care institution in which she worked offered her about starting that kind of care. It was an uphill battle and a very slow one; doctors are trained to make people live, and if a patient died, it was considered a failure. Hospice is about helping people to die with dignity and helping their families to accept it and cope with this process of death. The medical community initially found this concept difficult to support. Marilyn plunged in and convinced the doctors one-by-one of the importance of caring for people in every phase of life. When people would ask her why she wanted to do this, she said, "Death is not always the worst thing to happen to somebody."

Her first experience in forming her philosophy on hospice care came when she was just starting out as a nurse in Minnesota. One Christmas Eve, she saw an R.N. caring for a man dying of Hodgkin's disease; they were talking and chatting about the Minnesota-St. Paul area. Marilyn thought to herself, "He's dying; how can she talk to him like that?" It taught her that dying people are still living, a lesson that has stayed with her through the years.

Several years later, Marilyn was asked to care for a man in her neighborhood dying of cancer. She was so impressed with how his teenage sons took care of him, how comfortable he was at home. His wife gave him his pain medication when he needed it, not when the clock said it...
was time. This was very different from how Marilyn, a hospital nurse, was used to doing things. Nobody took his blood pressure or took his temperature, because it didn’t make a difference. The last time Marilyn saw him, he was saying goodbye to his family. When she walked in the room, he looked up. “Hey, Beautiful, where did you come from?” Everybody laughed, the tension in the room broken. This illustrated the importance of humor, when appropriate, in hospice; humor eased the stress for the whole family.

Marilyn is like most quiet heroes. She couldn’t readily think of that “Ah Ha” moment when she realized she was doing something that counted. When pressed, she remembered that early in the development of hospice when it was financially struggling, members of a hospital auxiliary who believed in her abilities and vision presented her with a check for $5,000. This was a good sum of money in the early 1980’s and it enabled the program to continue until Medicare certification was in place. It was the first time that she recognized that someone believed in her and what she was doing. Adversity has not been a stranger in her own life, either. Marilyn is a breast cancer survivor of 25 years. A woman with a great sense of humor, she dealt with that like everything else, with a supportive husband and sister… and optimism. Her children and their perspectives on her illness also helped her to defeat her cancer.

Marilyn has continued to accept and challenge herself. At 50 years of age, she climbed Mt. Borah. Now that she is retired, she has more time to volunteer in areas other than the medical field. She mentors the current administrators of the hospice, and serves on the board of directors and is available any time to help and coach them. They call her “the grand lady of hospice.” A typical week consists of hospice board work, serving as a docent at the art gallery, planning menus or cooking at the soup kitchen, tutoring reading in a 4th grade class at elementary school, and reading her favorite books (Marilyn’s in a book club, too).

Marilyn’s daughter, Beth, nominated her as a “woman making history” and she is well aware of Marilyn’s accomplishments. Beth grew up feeling that the world was hers for the taking because her mother was so confident and self-assured. It was the greatest gift a mother could give to her daughter.

When widowed, she moved back to Boise and, as she puts it, the opportunity to “selfishly pursue my goal of coming out” was presented. With a slight smile, Dallas also attributed her greatest strength, stubbornness, with enabling her to step up as a leader in the gay community.

After coming out, she was hurt and incredulous at how she was treated by those whom she had counted as friends. For years, she was hurt and incredulous at how she was treated by those whom she had counted as friends.

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SUE BILLINGTON WADE, Boise, Idaho
By Janelle Higgs - Janelle is a recent graduate of Boise State University with a Bachelor's degree in English. She is an aspiring nonfiction writer and is thankful for the strong support of friends and family. Janelle believes that doing what you want in life and listening to your heart leads to a life of good fortune.

When you ask Sue Billington Wade to explain her nonprofit organization, “Walkin’ the Talk,” she is immediately filled with a powerful energy. Her face lights up and her words reveal her passion about what she does. Sue's company teaches children and parents how to communicate, how to understand emotional intelligence, which creates responsible adults in our society. "Walkin’ the Talk” conducts workshops in schools and businesses across the country and in parts of Canada.

However, “Walkin’ the Talk” has grown from simple yet urgent beginings. Sue always knew she was going to be a teacher and served in public schools and in colleges. For years, she read journal after journal from students who were filled with pain and anger. For example, she once had a student who committed suicide, leaving a note to his family saying all he wanted was to have someone to listen to him. Another time, a forty five year old man, tears in his eyes, asked, “How can I tell my daughter how I am feeling.” She was dismayed at all of the needless situations she was seeing and hearing. She began to realize the strong need building within her to reach out and help children and parents. Sue followed her calling with a passion – a calling to listen to children.

In 1995, Jack Canfield, motivational speaker and co-author of the Chicken Soup for the Soul series, spoke at Boise State. Sue was in the audience when he asked, “What is your goal?” The audience was quiet as Canfield looked around at everyone, almost daring someone to speak. Sue squirmed in her seat and saw herself raising her hand. Canfield looked at her and repeated his question. She stood up and said, “I will have a self-esteem company for teenagers by May ‘96.” Afterwards, Sue stood outside with Canfield, tears in her eyes, “How am I going to do this?” she wondered out loud. But she knew even as she questioned her goal that it didn’t matter how. "Standing on the edge of an abyss,” Sue gave up her teaching career to begin the company. She spent the next eleven months forming her nonprofit organization dedicated to teenagers. The company has now grown and become her legacy.

In one of her newsletters, Sue writes, “If we want to developing healthy self-esteem in our children, it’s time we let them be honest with us about some of our parenting styles. We must be open to hear the truth; we need both the negative and the positive behaviors we tend to recycle from our own beliefs and upbringing. The parenting days of do

DALLAS CHASE, Boise, Idaho
By Janis McGee

Truth is the key. It might seem strange to define a person by those four short words, but that sentence holds a world of meaning for human rights activist Dallas Chase.

Dallas is an articulate conversationalist who speaks thoughtfully when asked a question. The word ‘truth’ comes up often during our interview. She spent twenty-six years, all of her adult life, as a Mormon. During that time she married, was sealed in the Manti Temple, and had two sons. But, she realized she was not being true to her inner self and was repressing an important part of herself. The catalyst came when her family moved to Portland, Oregon. The move and the death of her husband while there shook her world to its core.
as I say and not as I do' are over. Our actions deliver a message much louder than our words, and that's the one our children are hearing and copying."

Sue teaches the art of "emotional intelligence" in her workshops. This includes, self-awareness, impulse control, motivation, empathy and social skills. Everyone gets a copy of "Know Thyself - Socrates," a national copyrighted workbook. Sue has the students draw their own "roadmap of life" and explains how one wrong turn can lead to a destructive dead end. When the students realize and learn their own life choices and mistakes, Sue says, "you can hear a pin drop in the room." It's that amazing. She tells them the facts of life without holding anything back. She "speaks the unspoken."

When young people speak their own pain, they create their own intervention. Your reaction to life, either negative or positive, affects others and can create a ripple effect. The more children and parents learn to talk about their feelings and frustrations early on, the more positive the ripple effect will be. Sue says, "It's important to shift old ideas and beliefs in order to create new habits" for everyone. "Prevention intervention" is the key.

Sue has applied her "emotional intelligence" strategy at home and sees the benefits with her son Jim. She "cares enough to ask the hard questions" and knows when to just step back and wait for him to come to her if he needs something. Last year, Jim told his mom that he wanted to go away to a kayaking school in Vermont. Sue allowed him to go because she could "hear" how important it was for him. With pride in her eyes, she recalls how Jim, a caring young man, an excellent student and a committed athlete, won second place last year at the Junior Olympics in slalom kayaking.

She is grateful for Jack Canfield, "for helping [her] pull [her] vision together." With the unwavering support of her family and friends, the volunteer board of "Walkin' the Talk," and most of the parents themselves, the dream continues to grow. Clearly history in the making, Sue loves touching so many lives: "the more children we reach, the more they will reach out to others until it is a universal phenomenon."

**STEPHANIE NEIGHBORS, Boise State staff**

*By Janelle Hegg*

"Today I know that such memories are the key not to the past, but to the future. I know that the experiences of our lives, when we let God use them, become the mysterious and perfect preparation for the work He will give us to do." - Corrie ten Boom, *The Hiding Place*

Like Corrie ten Boom, Stephanie Neighbors has opened her heart to serving others. If she sees you walking by her desk, she will smile. If she sees that you are lost, she will stop you and send you in the right direction. If she sees that you are having a bad day, she will greet you and let you know she cares. If she sees you suffering, she will do whatever it takes to make you happy.

If you've ever walked by the Student Activities desk in the Boise State Student Union, then you have most likely seen Stephanie. She is known as the "school mom" and does not mind the position. As administrative assistant, she not only keeps the department of Student Activities running smoothly, similar to Corrie ten Boom in her father's clock shop, but at the same time, she takes the time to greet most everyone walking by, letting them know she cares. According to her nominator, Johann Vargas, "The attention she gives each individual is amazing. She never misses anything."

Working the last seven years in Student Activities, Stephanie has come to know a great assortment of people. She has received numerous letters over the years from students she has impacted, thanking her for the time she has given them. She finds great satisfaction in just being able to be there for people. Her one undying belief is that if "God loves everybody then I don't have an option but to do the same."

Stephanie has brought desperate souls to her own home. She has seen the need of others and has sacrificed her own comfort and security in order to open her roof over someone else's head. "The balance of having to protect myself and my family taught me to be strong. Determining the boundaries when reaching out is hard when someone's hurting," but for Stephanie, sometimes you just do the best you can when someone needs you. Stephanie has learned that she can't "be a savior" and "you have to be responsible for the way in which you give." If she sees someone going through something that she has experienced, like the weariness of going through a divorce, trying to balance being a single mom and only being able to see your kids on certain days, or just trying to support yourself, then she won't wait for the person to ask for help; she knows how hard it is to have to ask. "She'll take that person home, or she'll clean that person's house, whatever she's able to do to help."

Stephanie has had her fair share of difficult times. Circumstances in life changed her direction. All she had ever wanted was to be married and have children. Seven years ago, Stephanie was happily married with two boys, when she suddenly found herself divorced and sharing the custody of her children. At the time of the divorce, her oldest son was only fourteen, and the other was seven. She comments, "I experienced the empty nest syndrome way earlier than I was supposed to." One of the hardest transitions she faced emotionally was that she didn't always know where her children were at all hours of the day. For years before, Stephanie had run a daycare out of her home so that she wouldn't have to send her kids to one. Her boys are everything to her and sees the need of others and has sacrificed her own life choices and mistakes. Sue says, "You can hear a pin drop in the room." It's that amazing. She tells them the facts of life without holding anything back. She "speaks the unspoken."

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**MONICA HOPKINS, Boise State student**

*By Janelle Hegg*

In a crowded study session at Southwest Texas State University, Monica Hopkins experienced her first social anxiety attack. Imagine yourself in a crowded room. A question is asked about a famous law case, Marbury vs. Madison, and you know the answer. Do you speak up, or let the question pass? That's the paradoxical moment that would have led Monica down different paths. It was in such moment; moments that would have led her down different paths if it were not for some divine intervention.

One such moment occurred when Monica was right out of high school and moved to Texas. Monica took some advice from her father, who was in the military, and she tried to join the Navy. During her medical examination, the doctor asked an important question. "Have you ever been hospitalized?"

Monica laughed. "Once... for anaphylactic shock... I'd gotten from fire ants."

The doctor looked at her. "Why don't you take a seat? You're not going anywhere for a while."

And so, Monica sat down. So much for the Navy! Looking back, she "realizes there is some greater cosmic plan" and she was meant to do something different. "Thank God for fire ants," Monica states as she reflects on all that she is doing now.

Other such paradoxical moments have also had a role in shaping Monica's life. While she was still in Texas, she began volunteering to work with mentally challenged individuals. This volunteer job was on a ranch where people came to learn hand eye coordination while riding the horses. One particular person was a twenty-one year old man with severe head trauma. The only word he could say was "home."

After a couple of months, he opened up to Monica and talked about his "dog." Monica comments, "It was incredibly exciting... just one word helped me to know I'd made a difference." A void was suddenly filled within me. People needed me... they needed to make a difference.

After those two incidents, Monica saw her own life unfolding. When she moved to Boise, in 1997, after living
Barbara has raised two girls on her own who have both grown to become very successful women, both deeply involved in the community and in life. Barbara reminds us that children are like a "blank piece of paper; you can help them to become so much more, just help them, guide them every so gently."

Barbara grew up the youngest of eleven children where she learned to value family at an early age. Barbara believes the reason she has come so far academically (receiving her bachelor's and master's degrees) is because she grew up playing pinocchle of all things. Spending time with family, figuring out strategies in card games, trusting your partner, and knowing when to catch a bluff are valuable life lessons.

After Barbara graduated from high school, little was expected of her. She didn't expect much of herself then, either. She married, had a child, and "was perfectly happy as a secretary." When Barbara's children were still young, she got a divorce and went back to school. As the "sole bread winner for [her] kids," Barbara needed a position that paid more than her secretary position. She currently works for Albertson's labor relations department where she advises management and deals with negotiations: if that doesn't put pinocchle skills to good use, then I don't know what does.

Just as her family had been there for her when she was growing up, Barbara has been there for her family as well. Barbara has attended every one of her daughters' events, everything from "games, meets, dances, theatre, music, or any other activity," to family events.

Barbara is a woman who gives advice to others to give some advice to the new mother. Barbara chuckles and names one of the many reasons she became involved in the community. "It's to help parents and kids talk about difficult life issues, like sex. It's important to take time to listen to people. Kids especially love to talk to you." Barbara has also served in soup kitchens around town, volunteered in retirement homes, and participated in "paint the town" and the kite festival. Giving back to the community is important for Barbara, Angela and Katie. Whether together or apart, each do what they can to help others. And both of her daughters will be attending graduate school to pursue their masters' degrees.

Barbara, an active volunteer assisting others, has also faced her own personal challenges. A survivor of a rare form of cancer called neurofibrosarcoma, a disease that is usually faced by children, Barbara has also served in the community. She has attended every one of her daughters' events, everything from "games, meets, dances, theatre, music, or any other activity," to family events. Barbara believes that taking an active part in the lives of children is definitely a way to make history. Raising her daughter was one of the most important things she has done in her life. She is "a quintessential woman, and a woman worthy of history," explains her nominator.

BARBARA NEWELL, Boise, Idaho

Barbara Newell was recently asked at a baby shower to give some advice to the new mother. Barbara chuckled and said, "Enjoy every minute. He'll be a senior in high school and graduating from college before you know it. It goes so fast." She believes that history is being made all the time with parenthood. "It can have either a bad or a good ending," she notes, "and a lot of bumps along the way, but being a good parent is the most successful thing anyone can do in life."
myself a teacher or someone who could relate with children. But Kay put my concerns at ease and assured me that my only task was to see that the kids had fun. Since then Kay has helped me establish a touring acting troupe for youth and a summer musical program with Boise Little Theatre." Kay has been a steady force and influence in Autumn's own development and growth.

Kay Mack is a phenomenal woman who cares deeply about the lives of others. By helping troubled teens and children turn their lives around, she is changing history through her positive influence on the future. Her warmth, sincerity, and positive attitude have changed the lives of countless people over the years. Although Kay Mack may not be big in stature, she is huge in heart. ✫

RUTH HARRIS, Boise, Idaho
By Delilah Troia: Delilah resides in Boise, Idaho where she is a Boise State student.

"In music, you can often express something that you can't express in words," Ruth Harris tells me. Since her retirement, which came shortly after the death of her husband in 1998, Ruth has found solace in her music. Fifteen years ago she began playing recorder and in the past five years, her involvement with music has deepened.

"Playing music was a big thing for me in [dealing with] grief," she says in relation to her husband's death. "I found it spoke to me, and I am very thankful for that." Ruth is an active woman. Besides involvement with music, she watches birds, takes walks, socializes, swims, exercises and goes to church. She travels often to see her daughter and grandchildren in Anchorage, Alaska. Her first grandchild was born two months after the death of her husband. With such a huge change in one's life like losing a loved one, it is sometimes reassuring to see her beautiful attitude about life. She says, "My greatest achievement is my daughter, sure work was extremely important, but you have a family and a hope for that young life that things will be better in the next generation."

"I was younger, I thought the patient was different from me. Over the years, I grew to believe we are much more alike than we are different, and that helps the patients have a part of me and a part of my life. My compassion and understanding grew. I think I was better social worker when I finished than when I started because of it."

Ruth has seen more death than most of us, and it is reassuring to see her beautiful attitude about life. She says, "My greatest achievement is my daughter; sure, work was extremely important, but you have a family and a hope for that young life that things will be better in the next generation."

The message — everything we do is important.

Some of us learn that decisions we make today are not always for us; they are often for the generation that follows. Life is a beautiful, bittersweet journey. Ruth tells me, "You keep learning all your life and don't quit [learning], hopefully. If you get to age 75 and you're still learning something new, do it. I could say I am too old, but I don't. I do it anyway." ✫

KELLEY JOHNSON, Eagle, Idaho
By Delilah Troia: Delilah resides in Boise, Idaho where she is a Boise State student.

Kind eyes. You know the sort of eyes, when you look into them, and it's as though you are looking right at the soul that lives within a person. Kelley Johnson's eyes told a story all their own. They radiated pure kindness. This is the story of a woman who appreciates life a bit more than the rest of us. She has seen sadness and fear and has walked through it.

An inspiration to many, this humble and quiet woman has managed to reach out through her involvement in the community, while overcoming her own set of challenges that many of us could not comprehend. Her peers describe Kelley as an 'unsung hero'; she works quietly behind the scenes dedicating much of her free time to breast cancer awareness in Idaho.

Kelley was born and raised in Boise, Idaho. She later went to Moscow to attend the University of Idaho, where she majored in finance. At the age of twenty-one, a junior in college, she found out she had a malignant brain tumor. She was just twenty-one years old with her whole life ahead of her, suddenly forced to deal with a life-threatening disease. Eventually, with treatment she defeated the cancer that left her partially paralyzed on the left side of her body. Kelley says, and behind the scenes is where you will find her, constantly working and organizing so that events like Race for the Cure come together. She is, along with peers, the backbone that makes it possible to raise money for breast cancer research. She is a role model who makes us realize the importance and appreciate the dedication of volunteers like her. ✫
**MARCH**

**2002**

**WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH**

**CALENDAR**

**Saturday, March 2**
- In Her Style: Children's Art Workshop, 1pm (primary), 2pm (intermediate), Ada Community Library. Create art in the style of famous women; explore the work of Georgia O'Keeffe. Free.

**Monday, March 4**
- The Art and Authorship of Beatrix Potter, 7pm, Ada Community Library. Introduction and background on Beatrix Potter and her work. Free.
- Jane: An Abortion Service, 7pm, Special Events Center Boise State. Film and lecture about Chicago based women's health collective that performed 12,000 safe illegal abortions between 1969 and 1973. Free for students; $3 general.

**Wednesday, March 6**
- Women in War, 6pm, Barnwell Room, Student Union Boise State. Discussion of women's involvement on battlefield and in government, community, and home in world's war zones. Free.
- Abigail Duniway and Idaho's Role in Women's Suffrage, 7-8:30pm, Boise Public Library. Dr. Debra Shein will highlight Duniway's career. Author reception at the Log Cabin Literary Center afterward. Free.

**Thursday, March 7**
- Family Storytime: Lady Tales — Tall and Otherwise, 7pm, Ada Community Library. Free.

**Friday, March 8**
- Afghan Women Before and After the Taliban, Noon, Grove Hotel. Yasmin Hamidi-Aguilar from Agency for New Americans will discuss role women play in Afghan society. Presented by City Club. Forum is free; lunch is $12 members, $17 non-members. Lunch reservations required. 371-2221.
- Hispanic Women Writers: A Panel Discussion, 7:30pm, Log Cabin Literary Center. $3 Log Cabin members, $6 general.
- Balance 5: Dance concert at Fulton Street Theater, 8pm. $5 students, $10 general. 331-3184.

**Saturday, March 9**
- In Her Style: Children's Art Workshop, 1pm (primary), 2pm (intermediate), Ada Community Library. Create art; explore work of Mexican artist Frida Kahlo. Free.

**Monday, March 11**

**Tuesday, March 12**
- Student Roundtable on Campus Climate for Women at Boise State, Noon, Farnsworth Room, Student Union. Voice your opinion on issues of concern to women on campus. Free.

**Thursday, March 14**
- 12th Annual Women of Today and Tomorrow Awards Lunch, keynote Mary Pipher, 12pm-1:30pm, Boise Center on the Grove, Girl Scouts of Silver Sage Council. $35, 377-2011. No tickets at door.
- Meet the Artist: C. Maxx Stevens, 6:15pm, Boise Art Museum. C. Maxx Stevens will discuss current installation on view. Free with general admission.

**Friday, March 15**
- Mahalia: A Gospel Musical, Morrison Center, 8pm, by Boise State Women's Center. Rousing new musical tells the true story of Mahalia Jackson, gospel singer and civil rights activist. $8 students; $14 fac/staff; $19 general. Tickets thru Select-a-Seat, 426-1494.

**Saturday, March 16**
- Mahalia: A Gospel Musical, Morrison Center, 8pm, by Boise State Women's Center. Rousing new musical tells the true story of Mahalia Jackson, gospel singer and civil rights activist. $8 students; $14 fac/staff; $19 general. Tickets thru Select-a-Seat, 426-1494.

**Sunday, March 17**
- Mahalia: A Gospel Musical, Morrison Center, 8pm, by Boise State Women's Center. Rousing new musical tells the true story of Mahalia Jackson, gospel singer and civil rights activist. $8 students; $14 fac/staff; $19 general. Tickets thru Select-a-Seat, 426-1494.

**Tuesday, March 19**
- The Women's Holocaust: The European Witch Hunts, 6pm, Farnsworth Room, Student Union. Why were approximately 100,000 women arrested on charges of witchcraft, tortured, and killed in Europe between the years 1400-1750? Free.
- Logghe Gala Presents: Unsung Heroines, 7:30pm, Log Cabin Literary Center. Features stories, poems and songs about non-famous women, whose stories aren't usually heard: pioneer days to WWII. Members $3, non-members $6.

**Wednesday, March 20**

**Thursday, March 21**
- Young Reader's Choice Book Discussion, 7pm, Ada Community Library. Discussion of *Backwater*, Joan Bauer's story of a young girl's quest to find herself. Free.

**Friday, March 22**
- Dramatic Reading with the Idaho Theater for Youth, 7pm, Ada Community Library. Students present theatrical reading of *The Diary of Anne Frank* and *Zlata's Diary*. Free.

**Saturday, March 23**
- Helen Thayer: The First Woman to Solo any of the World's Poles, 2pm, Discovery Center of Idaho. Helen Thayer, at 50 in 1988, began her journey across North Pole and has since trekked the Yukon, Amazon, and Sahara. 343-9895.

**Thursday, March 28**
- Mary Hallock Foote's Idaho by Judy Austin of Idaho Historical Society, 7-8:30pm, Boise Public Library. Native of New York and trained artist (1884-1894), she wrote prose and created many illustrations with scenes of Idaho life. Free.

**Saturday, March 30**
- Make It, Play It, Be It: Hands-on Art for Kids & Accompanying Adults, 2pm, Boise Public Library. Join women artists as they lead a hands-on session to create. Free.
- Family Art Saturday: Creations in Clay, drop in noon-3pm, Boise Art Museum. Explore sculpture of Viola Frey and shape your own figures in clay. Free with general admission.

*For Complete Schedule Descriptions: www.news.boisestate.edu*

Presented by Boise State & The Cultural Network
DR. STEPHANIE WITT
Boise State University

"I have an irrepressible desire to live till I can be assured that the world is a little better for my having lived in it." — Abraham Lincoln

It isn’t out of character for a professor of political science to challenge her students to investigate their "rights and responsibilities," as citizens in this country. Dr. Stephanie Witt, her name reflecting an integral part of her character, reminds us to look a little more closely at the "responsibility" side of that statement and venture beyond merely focusing on individual rights.

Stephanie Witt began her career at Boise State University in 1989 as a political science professor, after receiving her doctorate from Washington State University in Pullman, Washington. She has chaired the political science department for six years, and has served as interim Associate Dean for the College of Social Sciences and Public Affairs, and was recently promoted to Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs. A learned scholar, she has published numerous articles, book chapters and books addressing a breadth of topics.

Along with her vast list of publications, Stephanie has been recognized for her contributions as a teacher and faculty member. A 1998 Outstanding Professor of the Year award recipient, Stephanie was nominated "because of her dedication to the highest standards of undergraduate education and her commitment to innovation in public service," noted one of her nominators J.D. Williams, State Controller.

A student that worked with her when she was as an internship coordinator noted, "She exudes the professionalism and truly caring nature that made my experience...first rate." Stephanie is known for her ability to focus on individual students, working hard to connect a student to meaningful learning experiences.

Her nominators state, "Dr. Witt is a mentor that is always available to lend an ear or helping hand to her students, staff and peers alike." As the past advisor of the Xi Chi Chapter of the National Political Science Honor Society, Dr. Witt anonymously paid the membership dues of a student (single mother of three) that was eligible for membership, but couldn't afford to pay the dues. The student, unaware of her benefactor, was both thankful and tearful at the generosity.

"Dr. Witt is selfless in her volunteering and support of the American Red Cross," her nominators continue. Stephanie's beginnings in the Red Cross do not fully reflect her intentional and mindful approach in her position, however. "I was walking through a mall one day in 1996 and saw a display for the Red Cross," she notes. She was looking for a way to get involved and to give back to her community. Stephanie is a trained disaster services volunteer for the American Red Cross.

"I was walking through a mall one day in 1996 and saw a display for the Red Cross," she notes. She was looking for a way to get involved and to give back to her community. Stephanie is a trained disaster services volunteer for the American Red Cross.
of food in Idaho during floods; she lends moral support and provides Red Cross supplies to victims of house fires; and she has spent countless hours answering phones at the Red Cross in response to the terrorist attacks of September 11th.

Truly selfless, Stephanie side-stepped the question about how she was "making history," by turning the conversation to the influential people in her life that impacted her own history. Raised in a blue-collar family, where no extended family members had ever attended college, Stephanie's future was impacted when a co-worker of her father's shared some information about college loan programs available through their employer, Boise Cascade. The information came to her father quite by chance, but planted a seed that allowed Stephanie to pursue a college education.

"We all owe something to someone," says Stephanie. "What you can give back [to the community] is not a zero sum. We get a lot more back when we give." Stephanie takes her responsibility to the community seriously in her work as a political scientist, a volunteer, and as an instructor. She urges students to take an active role in their education, "to try to make it as worthwhile and meaningful as possible." While faculty members are important figures in the equation of education, students cannot forget their responsibility to engage in the learning process. And her students relish the opportunity to engage in class due to her innovative and creative methods of teaching. One of her former students noted, "The hours students spend in her classes [seem more] like minutes."

Stephanie possesses admirable personal qualities, which include her caring nature, calm intelligence, and her sense of humor. In fact, she is renowned for her marked wit, an irony she carries with her name.

Dr. Stephanie Witt has made history at Boise State in many tangible ways, like being one of the only female professors in the political science department for quite some time. However, as one of her former students described, "I cannot begin to do justice in explaining her achievements... She is like a bit of magic; it must be experienced in order for one to truly understand her greatness."
Early in the morning, before the sun had even risen, the family station wagon pulled into the farmer's field, the heat still lingering from the day before like hot smoke lingering at the ceiling of a smoke-filled bar. Anita grabbed her sack and hurried into the field; the older children got started with their parents while the little ones still slept in the car. The pungent smell of onions surrounded her as she began to pick up handfuls of onions left on the ground behind her parents in the row ahead of her. She had learned to work fast. As the sun peeked over the horizon to remind them that the heat was growing, the little ones slowly awoke. This is what Anita and her family did every summer until she was fourteen years old. Anita was born in the winter to Nampa where Anita Pedraza was born.

Anita was raised speaking Spanish until she learned English in the Nampa school district. It was this beginning that lent itself to Anita's later compassion and dedication to her work. She became her desire to bridge the gap that existed between the migrant families and the rest of the community. Anita married and started her own family young. Her husband speaks limited English and his family speaks only Spanish. Fluent in both, she was not only able, but also enjoyed helping with things like interpreting, filling out applications, and getting people to doctor's appointments where she acted as an interpreter.

This help started with her in-laws, but it didn't end there. Friends and newly arrived migrant families began to ask for her assistance, and she happily obliged. Her positive reputation with the migrant families led to her eventual employment within the school system.

When the position at the school became available, she was asked to apply. It was as though she had been preparing for this career her whole life. Anita is now migrant home school coordinator for the Nampa school district. Her work centers on education; the main objective is getting the children of migrant families into school. Anita actively looks for families, helps them complete paperwork to get the kids registered, helps to get the children immunized, sets the children up for school, and assists the parents. Anita fills one of only two positions that cover the thirteen schools within the Nampa school district.

Anita says, “My job is to help with just the school, but you have to branch out. Sometimes it is medical or other areas that they need help with. The catalyst for Anita's venture into community service seems to have been her relationship with her grandfather. When she was a teenage girl, after having "lost" her first language she could no longer communicate with her own grandpa. It was the motivation for her to relearn her first language, Spanish. She has watched her own children go through the school system and slowly lose their first language. She now acts as interpreter between her children and their grandparents. She believes that in time they will learn to appreciate their first language, just as she did.

It is the experience she has gained from her personal life that lends itself to the empathy she has for the families she works with. In a heartfelt statement she says, "Spanish speaking parents don't know exactly what is going on in school or how their children are being taught. It is important that these kids see that the parents are involved and want to know what is going on in their lives. If they don't, we lose a lot of these kids, and we're not ready to lose these kids."

Anita recognized that it isn't just the children that need help integrating into the system — sometimes the parents need the most help. This is set up to facilitate the children's integration into our English speaking community; they adapt easily and often flourish. The trouble comes when the children join the community and their parents are left standing on the other side. This is when a woman like Anita steps in and makes it easier for families to join together again. She is the bridge. She goes beyond her job description and continually makes huge differences in living conditions of entire families, thus differences in the entire community.

When I asked her how she felt about being nominated as a 'woman making history,' she seemed a bit uncomfortable with the description and said, "Anybody could have done this. I don't see anything heroic or special about what I am doing; it is just gratifying... I think I will keep it up," she adds with a smile. "I am not done yet..."
RENÉE B. MULLEN, Boise, Idaho

This article was a collaborative effort between Renee Mullen, Melissa Winrow and Julia Michael, a local highschool senior writing for a Girl Scouts project.

"My parents tell me that as a small child, I cried when trees were cut," Renée remembers. Although she realizes now that there are times when the cutting of trees is appropriate or necessary, Renée B. Mullen continues to be passionate about conserving the environment. In fact, she has made conservation her career.

Renée received her Ph.D. in microbial ecology in 1995 at the University of Colorado. Her doctoral work focused on the tiny snow buttercup, Ranunculus adoneus, which lives only in alpine tundra, and its symbiotic relationship with mycorrhizal fungi. She has published her work in various international ecological journals. Lately, however, Renée's attention has shifted from this tiny flower to a much larger subject: conservation around the world. She works as a scientist for the Nature Conservancy, an international, non-profit organization that specializes in conserving land and waters for the protection of biodiversity. She came to this position through a somewhat circuitous route.

After graduate school, Renée moved to Boise, taught microbiology and botany courses at Boise State as an adjunct professor, and procured a postdoctoral fellowship through the national research council in Pensacola, Florida. This work led to a tenure-track position as the microbiologist at the University of Southern Maine, which she accepted in 1997.

Throughout her pursuit of academics, however, Renée worried about the environment and the rapid disappearance of open, natural spaces. Although her work in microbiology was challenging and fulfilling, she felt she was not doing enough to further conservation. Wanting to learn more about what she could do, she worked in Boise as a summer intern for the Idaho chapter of the Nature Conservancy, an experience that was "one of the best experiences of [her] life." At the end of the summer, a position with the Nature Conservancy's national science division became available and Renée immediately accepted the offer. Now she works as a conservation planner organization-wide, meaning she works with a small group of people here in Boise on the methods of large-scale conservation planning.

Part of her job is to communicate the conservancy's work to others. "I am most excited about my upcoming trip to China," Renée notes. She was recently invited by the Chinese government to travel with a group of other Nature Conservancy scientists to the Yunnan Province of China. As a result of restrictions on logging and an increase in ecotourism, the Chinese government has become increasingly interested in conservation and has asked the Nature Conservancy to hold a workshop for Chinese government officials to learn about the conservancy's methods for conservation.

Renée is also interested in local conservation matters and has been involved in Boise foothills issues since moving to Boise for the first time in 1992. She grew concerned that the there seemed to be no thoughtful, long-term plan for conserving open spaces in the foothills. "The city sort of seemed to stamp development permits as they came along," She wrote to city council members and presented information from other cities proactive about conservation of open spaces and thus their quality of life.

Because of her experience in conservation planning, Renée served as a consultant to the citizens' committee, which created the plan prioritizing land to be targeted by the Boise foothills serial levy. When the levy passed in May, Renée felt a great relief and became optimistic about the future of the foothills: "People really stood up and said 'we care'."

Although the future of the Boise Foothills (as well as our planet) is uncertain, Renée believes that there are things we can do to help. Education is foremost. Whether it is exposure to the wonders of nature, information about the effects of too much development, such as erosion and loss of habitat, or simply fostering a love for the environment, Renée feels that as a society, we would all benefit from learning more about our natural world.

"Think about the future," she urges. "Learn from the examples of Europe and the eastern United States. Examine what they have done well or not so well." Renée reminds us, "Idaho is on the edge... we haven't ruined our state yet, and we have an opportunity to plan better," so we don't ruin the beautiful habitats that we love. Renee's work draws us to examine the information before us and make a decision on what we value as citizens. If we value open spaces, the intrinsic benefits of a beautiful landscape, then we must act on our values and protect it. Her work provides us with the essential information to make decisions and to plan development in a meaningful way, instead of simply allowing market values to dictate how land is used.

Whether she's hiking, skiing, mountain biking or gardening, Renée has always loved the outdoors. Conservation is her passion, and she is not afraid to fight for it. Her willingness to make radical career changes and her initiative and dedication with the foothills have shown that she is prepared to take chances in order to protect the environment: "I have a willingness to go for it.... to take risks for what I believe in."

LESLEY GORANSON, Boise State staff

By Wendy Mercer

Like many people in America, Lesley Goranson was blind to the needs of those around her; that is, until 1991 when her mother became terminally ill. Lesley sacrificed leave and vacation days to take care of her mother for two years. During that time, she contemplated the plight of others when her mother died in 1993, Lesley found new employment, but her concern for others remained. Lesley was not able to express her distress until discovering Habitat for Humanity in 1995. She started working with this group after she moved to Boise to start a job she purposely took because it offered fewer hours. This gave her more time to volunteer in the community and to fulfill her dreams of making a difference. After volunteering at St. Luke's for fourteen months, she finally succeeded in becoming a more steady part of Habitat for Humanity in 1997. Her administrative talents were quickly recognized, and she was appointed to the board as the family partnership chair for 14 months.

However, in her volunteer work, she realized that something had to be done about community intolerance of those who are different from mainstream society: diversity in ethnicity, religion, or sexual orientation. She was particularly distressed at "religious" groups that were preaching intolerance and hate, fueling misunderstanding in the community. When her minister informed her of an organization called The Interfaith Alliance of Idaho, founded for the purpose of promoting religious tolerance and curative power, she left Habitat and contributed her talents to the new position. She later served as its president. Currently she works with The Interfaith Alliance of Idaho, while doing free-lance volunteer work in many areas.

She worked as a liaison between the board of The Interfaith Alliance and the community. Actively realizing her passion, with the assistance of an organization called Voices for Faith, she helped promote workshops about overcoming hate. She is vocal about her beliefs: "I cannot condone hate groups masquerading as religious organizations...Religion should promote love. The groups we have in Idaho today do not speak for all people of faith."

So far, fourteen communities have had the opportunity to benefit from these workshops, and she is assisting in the development of the phase two series of workshops called "Next Step."

Lesley is also a resource person between The Interfaith Alliance of Idaho and the Boise Community Response Network, an organization that follows up on hate crimes with a positive response. Furthermore, acting again as a liaison for The Interfaith Alliance and for the Boise State cultural and ethnic diversity board, Lesley serves on the planning committee for "Long Night's Journey into Day," a Sundance 2000 film about the truth and reconciliation committee's efforts in post-apartheid South Africa.

In her position at Boise State, Lesley uses her business expertise to make financial problems easier for both the students and the administration. Essentially a trouble-shooter, she and her co-workers put service first; problems are taken care of as soon as they receive the complaint. Always looking out for the interests of others, she is a source of "wisdom and judgment" and stress-lifting humor for the office as she makes the tough calls involved in financial decisions. For holidays, she motivates the office to sponsor needy families.

Lesley firmly believes in the power of conflict resolution. "Communication is the most critical thing in the world," she says. She knows that if people could come to understand other people's positions, there would be a lot less hate and misery.

Lesley is an active, compassionate, fun woman. "Think globally, act locally" is her motto, and she firmly puts her beliefs into practice. In all areas of her life, she remembers the less fortunate, and provides a voice for voiceless minorities while enjoying what life has to offer."
strongly valued individuals, and who were committed to helping others. Interaction with these people of all different backgrounds inspired her to become very active on campus, opening eyes, dispelling stereotypes, and encouraging dialogue on racism. Karen declared sociology as her major with a minor in public health. In addition to WOCA, Karen has volunteered for the alliance for dismantling racism, which sponsors workshops and events to increase awareness of vital race issues. She has also served on the advisory board to the Boise State Women's Center and participated in the play The Vagina Monologues, by Eve Ensler.

Karen knows that change in attitude will not come easily, but she is committed to working for it. To all who are searching to broaden their perspective, she says, “Seek the truth.” Read books written by people of different ethnicities and cultures. Investigate history, and have educated discussions with people of various backgrounds. Do not accept statements at face value; discern bias and avoid prejudice. Karen herself has provided a wonderful example of broadening one's own perspective to see the importance of all people. She learned from a difficult situation, and used her experience to help others in the same position.

DANA MILLER, Nampa, Idaho

By Wendy Mercer

Dana Miller cares for people. Growing up, she had always wanted to be a school nurse. She pursued that goal. The real challenge was to better understand and appreciate the unique needs of children. She became a school nurse. In the mid 1980’s, Dana started working part time for the Nampa School district as the only nurse in one of the largest, poorest school districts in the state of Idaho. Seeing the results of poverty and lack of health insurance, she quickly realized that she alone could not help all kids, especially just working part time. The school district increased her hours to full time, and she increased her influence from lobbying for nutrition to working with teachers on free physicals for students in need. As Dana, and the school administrators realized through Dana’s example, more important school nurses are, the school district hired more nurses and Dana became coordinator of the school nurse program. They respected her “vision, leadership, and caring.”

As Nampa’s school nurse coordinator, Dana supports the role of all school nurses to improve health care for students. Dana really enjoyed actively helping people. When she was stationed in Turkey, she took full advantage of all that living in another country offered. Being a diplomat, warm-hearted person, she quickly made friends among the Turks. Fascinated by Middle Eastern culture, she experienced history and learned much from her travels. She was disturbed by the treatment of women in Turkey, however. Coming back to the United States, she became a vocal advocate for women’s issues, especially in the areas of pregnancy and parenting.

Dana earned her bachelor’s degree in nursing at the University of Utah. While she was there, public health began to fascinate her. What a great way to help people, she thought. Preventive care could help people, especially children, avoid the consequences of disease and the trauma of life-threatening illness. She continued her education at the University of Texas. After having her first child, Tyson, she and a close friend, who had also just given birth, decided to start a part time project for young parents. Backed by the Junior League, the Young Family Resource Center would teach parenting skills, distribute items to low-income families, and ensure that children would get the best start in life. More people joined them, and they co-wrote an article for a nursing journal about their success. The best part was how much fun they had.

Dana really enjoyed actively helping people. When she and her family moved to Nampa, she and another friend started a similar program called Early Parenting Support Services. This project did not enjoy the longevity of the first one, but it did attract attention for the message of healthy parenting. That was what Dana wanted to accomplish. At the same time, Dana was living her dream of being a school nurse. In the mid 1980’s, Dana started working part time for the Nampa School district as the only nurse in one of the largest, poorest school districts in the state of Idaho. Seeing the results of poverty and lack of health insurance, she quickly realized that she alone could not help all kids, especially just working part time. The school district increased her hours to full time, and she increased her influence from lobbying for nutrition to working with teachers on free physicals for students in need. As Dana, and the school administrators realized through Dana’s example, how important school nurses are, the school district hired more nurses and Dana became coordinator of the school nurse program. They respected her “vision, leadership, and caring.”

As Nampa’s school nurse coordinator, Dana supports the role of all school nurses to improve health care for students. Willing to contribute to a worthy cause, Dana jumped on the chance to help with her church’s Open Arms Baby Project. Along with BSU, NNU, the March of Dimes, and greater Nampa community, the project sponsors an incentive program for low-income mothers. Student nurses from BSU and NNU volunteer to receive valuable experience as they assist parents and children from different backgrounds. She is also involved in Healthy Nampa/Healthy Youth.

Considering that Dana is such an active person, one would never think she would ever want to retire, but she has plans for when her working career is over. She wants to spend even more time volunteering as parish nurse for her church, and with the Nampa Lions Club. Investing in the lives of young people is another area in which she would like to continue. She also wants to further develop her online marketing business. Dana knows that time is short, but she wants to use it to the best of her abilities to get the most done. What advice would she give to those just starting their nursing careers? “Be open-minded, and research what you want out of life. Don’t just fall into whatever comes around. Nursing is a broad field. And remember, community service is important.”

Dana is a role model herself. Through her warmth, diplomacy, and concern for others, she has made a lasting impression on the families of Nampa. Realizing her dreams, she has enjoyably enriched the lives of others in all her activities.
What concerns Burkett is that the paucity of women engineers and engineering students can erode a young woman's confidence if she seeks a position in what is still a male bastion. "I think sometimes women [engineering students] don't have the same confidence level as their male counterparts," Burkett said. "They often have the same ability, but not the same self-confidence. I think to a certain extent it's inherent in our nature."

A key for females to overcome such a situation, should it exist, says Burkett, is for them to find strong role models such as advisors and mentors and a common bond, such as the Society of Women Engineers chapter.

"I think a female [faculty] advisor is very helpful for female students," she said. "I think a female can help a student be aware of some of the battles she is going to face. Finding, and then trusting, a good adviser is important. And that's not to say there aren't good male advisers out there.

Burkett has done more than her part to set a good example. Among the projects she has spearheaded was a program called the Research Experience for Undergraduates (REU), which is designed to draw some of the nation's top undergraduate engineering students to Boise State. The three-year project received a $200,000 grant from the National Science Foundation and allowed the visiting students the unique opportunity to gain invaluable summer research experience in the microelectronics field by using the facilities and tapping the expertise of professors at Boise State. According to Burkett, the REU program is designed to raise the students' awareness of graduate studies and provide them with opportunities to make contacts with fellow students with similar interests.

Burkett also received a $200,000 NSF grant for research on magnetic materials for "read" heads. The funding is ongoing through 2001.

She has also received $1.9 million in federal funding for her involvement with a project with the Microelectronics Center of North Carolina in the fabrication of a new technology that will focus on materials and processing of three-dimensional structures.

Most recently, Burkett is part of a research team with two colleagues from Boise State's chemistry department that is working to develop an instrument to verify compliance with nuclear nonproliferation treaties. The project, which is earmarked to receive $600,000 in funding from the Department of Energy, builds on the university's ongoing research efforts to develop miniaturized sensors that can detect subsurface contamination.

Despite the frustrations, Burkett believes her college has a niche in the Pacific Northwest in regard to university research. "We aren't going to compete with the big name schools with lots of resources," she said. "But there is no reason we can't be a premier institution in this area.

No doubt, Burkett will help lead the way.

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SUSAN BURKETT, Boise State faculty

By Bob Eschnick: Bob is a writer for the Boise State Office of News Services. He has a bachelor's degree in sociology and arts & media from Grand Valley State University in Michigan and a master's degree from BSU's interdisciplinary studies program.

The words trailblazer and pathfinder are often overstated. But in the case of Susan Burkett, they seem perfectly applicable.

While Burkett, a Boise State University professor of electrical and computer engineering, is reluctant to assume that label, she is nevertheless a pioneer in the eyes of many of her colleagues and students — especially when you consider the following:

• Working in the male-dominated field of electrical and computer engineering, Burkett secured a job with the prestigious Center for Materials for Information Technology at the University of Alabama in the mid-1990s, two years after earning her Ph.D. in electrical engineering from the University of Missouri.

• In the summer of 1997, she became the first full-time female professor in BSU's new College of Engineering.

• In November 1998, once the college was up and running, she helped establish the Boise State chapter of the Society of Women Engineers (SWE) and has been an important role model to female engineering students at the university.

• Since her arrival at Boise State, Burkett is (or has been) involved in four major research projects that have received (or are scheduled to receive) a total of roughly $3 million in funding from outside sources.

Given the scarcity of women at the Ph.D. level in electrical and computer engineering and the fact that she is one of only four full-time female engineering professors at Boise State, Burkett sometimes feels she's in the spotlight, but her relatively high profile is important when it comes to providing a role model for young women who are studying engineering.

Currently, women comprise only 13 percent of the undergraduate and 22 percent of the graduate enrollment in electrical and computer, mechanical and civil engineering at Boise State, while the national undergraduate level is around 20 percent.

Those low numbers, Burkett contends, sometimes create significant hurdles for women in the professional and academic arena — even in BSU's up-and-coming engineering school. "Sometimes I feel like I'm the only person who thinks the way I do, and it gets frustrating," she said. "I think the situation for women [students and professors in the college] will improve when we get more females. But sometimes I feel that the female voice here is kind of ignored. If you are at all aggressive, the perception is different for a woman than it is for a man. If you're a man, you're applauded for being a crusader, but if a woman fights hard for what she believes in, the same respect isn't always there."

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NANCY JACOBSEN, Boise State student

By Barb McEvoy: Barb is a mother to and classmate with her greatest joy and only daughter, Nicole. She studies writing, anthropology, and geology. She is focused on the discovery, interaction, and interpretation of American culture.

"The energy we all have can be used to absorb and deflect the aggressions aimed toward us," Nancy Jacobsen

Nancy Jacobsen is one of those rare individuals who both radiate a subtle positive energy and who is also acutely aware of the power of optimistic benevolence. I first met Nancy in a non-fiction writing class at Boise State. One day while we were in a group presenting our own work, Nancy read an emotional essay espousing the virtues of vulnerability, which lead to inner peace and tranquil serenity. The class listened as she read each word filled with emotion, written with pure integrity. All was quiet and I remember being mesmerized by the beauty of her insights. After the presentation she handed me the paper and said she wrote it for me as a gift. Her gesture did not go unnoticed and it appears, as she works toward the close of her college career, she has never forsaken her mission to uplift and value others around her.

Nancy works at the Gateway Center at Boise State, previously as a peer advisor and administrative assistant, and currently as the tutorial assistant. Kari Goldade says, "She embodies the concepts of success, determination, kindness, reciprocity, enthusiasm, infinite energy and innate caring for every individual." Like an unseen energy force she listens to those in need and helps them find the power within themselves to move forward and succeed.

Currently she participates as an intern mediator in small claims court. Although it takes a great deal of courage to place herself between two people who are at odds with each other, she says when the outcome has the adversaries smiling and agreeing, she feels she's made a difference. Nancy is driven by her conviction — if she can show others the value of listening to one another with care and attention, then this world will be filled with happier people living fuller lives.

"I hope I'm showing people compassion and empathy... teaching others to care about one another," she says. "I give my mom credit for my empathetic approach; she is a social person who is very kind to others."

Nancy has lived in New York, Massachusetts, and California. The move to California when she was nine years old was due to financial hardships. But while the transitions were wreaking havoc on Nancy and her siblings, she kept faith that all would work out fine and continued this coveted positive attitude throughout her life. "My sister still says I was too adjusted as a child," she reflects. However, Nancy has overcome other more difficult hardships — hardships that have given her the empathy and strength to better assist her fellow students. She is reluctant to speak of these only to say, "I am very persistent. My biggest hurdle has been when to say no, but I have learned that when things don't go right — allow this." A tough lesson in the face of adversity.

Family is very important to her. With excitement she shows me pictures of her grandchildren, two darling little girls, and praises her husband, Rick, for supporting her. Tears fill her eyes when I ask, "So who is your Nancy?" She proudly says, "He is," referring to the photo of her husband. Tears continue to swell when she speaks of her commitment to her family and to society. She hopes to apply her studies and become a dynamic agent in our community as a mediator in child custody disputes, and to "work with those who are under-privileged."

Nancy is particularly proud of her involvement in many campus clubs and organizations at Boise State: Phi Kappa Phi, National Honor Society, the Leadership Education & Development Series (LEADS), Golden Key Honors Society, and serving as a mentor in the Women's Center returning women's mentoring program. She returned to
school after having a successful career first as a co-owner of a construction company and then as an escrow manager for a small private company. She acquired both of these positions by working hard and never giving up — stamina and determination well role-modeled to other women returning to school.

Nancy is well known as a student and student staff member at Boise State — mostly due to her warmth and caring attitude. Nancy goes out of her way to welcome new students and assist them on their road to graduation.

As her nominator, Kari Gildade notes, "She shows enduring kindness to all those around her, especially students. She approaches all she does with great enthusiasm and infinite energy... It doesn't matter if a person is homeless and asking for money, or if a student is on probation, Nancy shows the same innate caring and nurturing to every individual she comes in contact with." It is people like Nancy Jacobson who subdue make history everyday by encouraging and empowering us to move ahead and follow our dreams.

FELICIA (FELIX) BOGARD, Payette, Idaho

"Understand yourself, who you are, and what your own traditions are; in this way you can appreciate the differences and likeness in others." Felix Bogard

Felix Bogard is a leader among the Native American community in the Treasure Valley. As her nominator, Gypsy Hall notes, "As a Lakota woman descended from the Red Cloud clan, she has helped other Indian people keep alive the strength and beauty of their culture and shared her rich heritage with the non-Native community throughout the Treasure Valley." Four years ago, Felix became the drum keeper of the Matoska drum (bearwhite), a traditional Lakota drum blessed by a revered Lakota medicine man from the Indian Reservation. The drum is unique as it is the first in the Treasure Valley composed of women singers and a few male elders and relatives — drum circles are typically composed of men only. As Gypsy reminds us, "For this reason, it took great courage and dedication to introduce this drum to the community."

As Felix talks about her relationship with the drum, she notes that when she touched it for the first time, "it was love at first sight. Two hundred years ago women did sit at the drum, but it is only recently that they have been allowed to regain their position and re-install their presence at the drum and as spiritual leaders."

She does not take her position with the drum lightly and has a deep relationship with tradition that solidifies her sense of responsibility and commitment to humanity. Her community is not restricted to Indian culture. On the contrary, it extends across cultures. Felix takes her drum, and her culture into elementary classrooms, university functions, and secular engagements, to teach others about diversity and unify people who may be timid or shy around other people.

As an organizer of an annual gathering called Global Village sponsored by the Ontario and Payette communities, Felix brings people together to experience the unique and common elements of a variety of cultures. In this daylong event, each cultural group creates a village within a community of villages each representing Japanese, Basque, Mexican, Irish, Italian, African, Assyrian, Native American and Scottish cultures. As Gypsy notes, every group marches in a parade together, and they pray together; then families with their children visit each village, experiencing music, crafts, dance, and traditions of each culture.

"I want the public to know about the history, strengths and unique beliefs of each other," Felix notes. "When they see the people (participants in the celebration) in the community, they will understand them better. Knowledge is power and with it you lose your fear of differences."

Felix consistently reaches out and helps others in her desire to unite our communities. Gypsy Hall shared a very touching example of the generosity and quiet leadership that Felix demonstrates: "A few years ago, Felix showed her Native generosity to a non-Native lady who had been a friend to the drum and cooked fry bread for fund raisers for Indian families in need. The generous lady was now dying of cancer. Felix made sure she was invited to a big feast that she coordinates, where she planned to honor this elder with a white bear necklace like that which all Matoska singers are honored to wear. When it came time to give the ailing lady her necklace, the new one could not be found. Felix, who always wears her necklace, keeping it safe over her heart, and unbeknownst to all but me who had happened to see, stood quietly alone, took off her own necklace and returned to present the honoring gift to the ailing elder. Felix and the drum’s singers gathered around her to sing an honoring song and to hug her good bye."

When Felix received the title of drum keeper, she also received special instruction: "Understand peace... take our culture and let it be understood with respect and thoughtful ceremony. If we don’t all come to understand each other, we will perish."

"My ancestors are with me every day and I must stay on the good ‘Red Road’ to show them respect by using good judgment," she says. "I know we are all human and sometimes we falter. It’s okay as long as you get back on the path. You make your choices."

Felix Bogard has indeed made her choices, and they have come to benefit many people in our community. She has served as co-chair of the Western Idaho Pow Wow Association, is a key success of Global Village and Day of the Drum, has performed at many schools, Garden City Days, Martin Luther King March, Women’s Center functions, and a multitude of church services across the area. According to her nominator, her friend, and greatest admirer, Gypsy Hall, "She is one of the most generous, selfless, insightful persons I know." Felix smiles when she reads Gypsy’s words and tells her "This is the drum she finds her greatest strength and reinforced belief in women’s empowerment. In Indian tradition ‘women have always had the greatest power’ and each song is a prayer...the creator hears."
she notes. "The hustle and bustle of everyday traumas can make us lose focus about what is truly important or what is only a momentary setback or crisis. Right now, be sure to give your loved ones an extra hug, and by all means, take a moment, even if it is only a few seconds, to stop and smell the roses."*

BARBARA MILLER, Kellogg, Idaho

By Barb McEwan

My office is in the backroom of a small 1970s track home on a quiet Boise cul-de-sac. The light streams through an eastward facing window blocked by the eaves of my neighbor’s house currently in the throes of abatement from toxic mold. From an aged computer screen, Barbara Miller stares at me from a photo I have downloaded from one of a dozen articles about her gleaned off the Internet. Sincerity and conviction mix nicely with her easy smile and gentle posture. I am awed and amazed by the words I read of her accomplishments in Idaho’s Silver Valley. Leading the Peoples Action Coalition she began to take action to clean up toxic waste leaching from an abandoned silver mine near her home in Kellogg, Idaho. Toxic waste in the form of lead and heavy metals has caused severe health problems for the children and adults in her community. The Ford Foundation has honored Barbara for her undaunted efforts to improve the lives of Idaho citizens and for her steadfast devotion to her own commitment as a "steward of the earth."

As I scroll down my computer screen, I begin to get a better idea of the environmental devastation outlined in this Ford Foundation article: "Today this is a land of beauty and environmental devastation, designated by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency as a 21-mile superfund site, the second largest in the nation. Though the E.P.A. targeted the site for cleanup in the early 1980’s, the damage has grown worse over time. As Barbara Miller explains, ‘One year, during a flood, the waters spread over a million pounds of mining pollution – arsenic, cadmium, mercury, zinc and lead – downstream to an area covering over 1,500 square miles.’ The pollution now reaches east into bordering Montana and as far west as Spokane, and may, through the Columbia River basin, eventually reach the Pacific."

As I pause from my research, I look east toward the efforts of the abatement in progress next door. How does a person garner the strength for the process of cleaning up 1,500 square miles? I re-read her nomination from Dr. Bob McCarl. Written coherently and with celebrated esteem he sketches a hero, selfless and determined. "Barb Miller is the strongest person I have ever known. Her strength is palpable as she looks you straight in the eye, states her beliefs and her position and challenges you to do the same."

These words daunt me. Again, how do I begin the interview? A little overwhelmed, I continue to read her nomination: "She has suffered physically and mentally for her beliefs in a community that has often shunned and abused her... She is a lone voice... has steadfastly refused to knuckle under pressure and continues her educational campaign... speaking up for safe living conditions... speaking against media attacks... holding the state of Idaho responsible... letting EPA do what it needs to do..."

Bob McCarl minces no words. Barbara Miller is making history as she works to restore the beauty and health of the Silver Valley in the face of opposition from those who stand to lose financially and politically. His confidence in Barbara as a leader is clear, but there is something more that begins to give me courage to write that first email, for he also speaks of his unpretentious friend: "Barbara is a quiet, unassuming person. She has a very strong personal belief in human justice... She also has a great sense of humor, a true love of the community and its potential."

And so, I begin to feel more comfortable and settle into my chair, my hands easing onto the keyboard. Barbara Miller is a lovely, courageous, genuine humanitarian worthy of high praise and friendship. Finally, I am able to send the first e-mail, and as predicted, a selfless, jovial, down-to-earth woman emerges in her own words upon my screen, complete with honorable values, integrity, determination, and friendship:

"All it takes is a desire to make the world a better place and a personal commitment to make it happen... there are scores of women in this Valley who deserve to be recognized for outstanding contributions to their community and what they have endured over the years. My strength [comes from] a strong value system impressed upon me by my parents and family to care for one another, to be good stewards of the earth and leave the world a better place... My father was a union organizer; he was a strong person, who came out of the depression and fought in World War 2. His own father died when he was about three... Both my grandmothers lived to be almost 100; they were pioneers of the true spirit! Perhaps I inherited their strength; my own mother raised twelve bright, intelligent children under some tough circumstances... My greatest joys are my children, two sons and two daughters. These individuals have been raised with some amazing situations and have gone on to be good people..."

Barbara Miller is a making history by continuing in the spirit of her ancestors. Her heartfelt love of the land and her admirable strength of character surpass those who have gone before her and line the pages in our history books. She is truly a mentor for women like me; her enthusiasm for life will remain in my heart and will be imprinted on my mind next to all of those who fight and live as stewards of this earth. Her story is our story.+

FATIMA MOHAMMADI, Boise State student

By Amber Armstrong

In mid July of 1979, a few months after Fatima Mohammadi was born in Iran, her American mother and her Persian father brought her to the United States. She is an only child and was raised as an Iranian girl with the traditional values of obedience, morality, and a diligent work ethic. She grew up learning Iranian Islamic culture and language at home, despite being surrounded and influenced by the pressures of American popular culture. Her parents have always been very loving, supportive, and encouraging of Fatima. Her faith and culture are very dear to her she gets much of her strength from her faith. The early spring of 1999 marked a change in her life when she, who had been raised Islamic, found herself talking about religion with a close Christian friend. Fatima found him to be warm and receptive, not ‘preachy’ or forceful, as she had imagined others to be. Their conversations got her thinking, and she began to question her place in her current faith. She had held doubts about Christianity with the thoughts that she would not be able to be as progressive if she became a Christian. Additionally, according to her knowledge of the Bible, women did not seem to be treated well; they were portrayed as temptresses or prostitutes. She began to learn about women such as Ruth and Mary, women who are portrayed as powerful forces for change; this helped change her views on the Bible and Christianity. Over the course of the next few months, she started going to a biblically based church and experienced a "whirlwind, hollow feeling... as if something wonderful was just waiting to happen to [her]."

In December of 1999, she went to the pastor of her church and accepted Christ.

The next day, she had doubts, almost regretting what she had done. "Slowly but surely," she began taking steps, realizing that true Christianity is about little more than promoting love, equality, and forgiveness, whereas any institutionalized religion can be shaded and confusing. With her change in faith, she has become a stronger person in that "she has Jesus," the greatest advocate of love and equality, as her example. Through small acts of God and faith everyday she is constantly strengthened. In her studies of God and the Bible, she finds many reminders of the very service that she finds to be most rewarding: defending and assisting the oppressed.

Fatima is a very strong woman who has gone through many difficult experiences, none of which she completely regrets. According to Fatima, these experiences have given her a better awareness of this world and of human character.

Without having gone through these difficult times herself, she would not be able to educate as effectively or act with urgency to help others. Fatima’s faith has helped her to better heal from these experiences. She feels that if she does not help others with the knowledge she has gained, then she will have suffered pointless.

Fatima has always been an excellent student and is currently involved with the Martin Luther King, Jr. Human Rights Week committee and is also a member of the alliance for dismantling racism. She first began her diversity work in high school when she became involved with Amnesty International, students for a better earth, and the political science club, as well as working to promote HIV/AIDS & STD education awareness in her school with a few peers. She continued to promote the mission of each of these groups in the Boise school district as an educator. Aside from being active in her diversity work, she also enjoys playing soccer, teaching, lifting weights, dancing, reading, and being with the people she loves. One of her favorite things is the feeling she gets from accomplishment, whether it be at work or school.

Fatima, who is "coming into awareness" of her rights and privileges, realizes that she can be a female Chicana feminist and part of a minority. These realizations help her appreciate her own history and make history of her own by teaching others. She graduated with her masters in English from Boise State University in December and is planning to attend law school in August. She believes that a "knowledge of the law will give her greater access, opportunity, and a more powerful voice to educate both students and adults of the injustice of oppression."+
LORRY ROBERTS, Boise, Idaho
By Anna Fritz: Anna is a freelance writer. She works for Boise State Radio.

Lorry Roberts lives in a bright turquoise house. You can’t miss it. Soon she’ll paint it bright purple. “It’s just for fun,” she says. Lorry Roberts is a charming, sweet woman who has done some seriously important work in her long and wildly interesting life, but fun seems to dominate it all. First, in 1947 to join her husband in Idaho. They lived in Caldwell because she is full of life. And she has made a lot of history:

Senior Olympics, working to eradicate land mines, political campaigns: “I always have fun.”

Engaging, committed, loving, and lovable, Lorry Roberts is the very picture of a woman who enjoys her life, because she is full of life. And she has made a lot of history along the way. Lorry left Nebraska with her infant daughter in 1947 to join her husband in Idaho. They lived in Caldwell for many years. Two more daughters followed, and Lorry, determined to send them all through college someday, went to work for JR Simplot.

It was the best thing I could have done,” she says. “Going to work really helped my self-esteem, and it paid for the girls to go to school.”

Lorry began her career in Caldwell, running the printing press to put out a newsletter and print forms. She eventually expanded into all of Simplot’s locations, creating standardized forms throughout all operations. She started out running the press herself; by the time she retired in 1989 she supervised 22 employees. Lorry also was the corporate photographer, logging a lot of hours shooting from helicopters and small planes, and she designed the corporate logo. Her years with Simplot were good ones.

It was an exciting time for a woman rising up in corporate America, but not without its challenges. One of those challenges was discrimination from male co-workers. But Lorry was determined to stick it out and be strong. “I was never going to use tears or let them get to me,” she says.

“You have a responsibility to the women who come after. But I had a lot of fun. In a meeting back in the seventies, one of the male managers asked me to get him a cup of coffee and I told him while he was up to get one for me too… and I take it black.”

Lorry did not slow down after leaving Simplot. She began publishing her own writing - including a collection of women’s stories called Elder Tales - along with the writing of others. She helps people write their life stories through a class she teaches at Boise State University, and helps them publish. “Other people’s lives are so fascinating,” she says, “and the technology now is wonderful. Anyone can publish.”

Lorry also taught a class called Fabulous Living After Fifty, and regularly competes in the Senior Olympics, throwing the javelin, shot put, and baseball, race walking, and shooting free throws. Her collection of medals is impressive. “I usually win first or second,” she says with a note of pride.

An old school, dyed in the wool, Nebraska Catholic Democrat, Lorry has been involved in many political campaigns over the years, including those for one of her heroes, the late senator Frank Church. Closest to Lorry’s heart, however, is her work with Soroptimist International, particularly Project Five-O, which helps women in third world countries develop employment skills and market native products. The group also focuses on the eradication of land mines. Since serving a four year appointment at the international level of Soroptimist in 1992, Lorry has become an expert on land mine issues, and is dismayed that the United States has not signed on to an international treaty. Lorry has latched onto the land mine cause, just as she has latched onto so many causes in the past, and she can’t let it go: “You see these things and you think, well, if I don’t do it, will it ever get done?”

Lorry feels for the opportunities she has had to help people. She also feels blessed by her family. Her daughters and their families, including three grandchildren, all live in Boise. “This country was built on family,” she says. “It’s what makes this country great. And it’s so precious to me, having the family all here.”

Lorry Roberts carries threads from the past to the future, and everything that has passed in-between. You can hear it when she talks about her father, who she “just adored,” and speaks movingly of her parents’ strength, honesty, and humor. You can hear it when she talks about how proud she is of her children and her grandchildren. She can hear it when she speaks of helping women all over the world. You can even hear it when she talks about donating her body to the Idaho State Anatomical Donor Program after she dies, to use for medical study, teaching, and research.

“It’s no wonder Lorry Roberts enjoys her life. No wonder she is so committed, so effective. No wonder she is so loved. No wonder she continues to make history. All in good fun, of course.”

LALANI RATNAYAKE, Boise, Idaho
By Anna Fritz

Practicing dentistry for the government of Sri Lanka is a world away from preventing teen sex, alcohol, drug, and tobacco use in southwest Idaho, but that is the path that Lalani Ratnayake’s life has taken. And thanks to her, many southwest Idaho children will choose a life path that is one of health, knowledge, and safety.

Lalani is a health educator with the Central District Health Department. She is the coordinator of the Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention (APP) program, and she facilitates programs on dental health, empowerment, and tobacco, alcohol, and drug use prevention.

She began her career as a dentist in Sri Lanka. When Lalani moved to the United States in 1980 - her husband, now an engineer with Hewlett-Packard and a graduate student here - she lived in Seattle, studied to become a licensed dentist, and completed her US national board examination requirements in 1987. She moved to Boise in 1988, and discovered she couldn’t become licensed in Idaho because state law didn’t recognize her dental education in Sri Lanka. She could have gone to school in Portland, but it would have involved too much travel and time away from her young sons. She decided to stay with the family and forego the license. In 1991, she became the instructor for the dental assistant program with the American Institute of Health Technology in Boise. She made a career move in 1997, joined Central District Health, and area youth are the better for it.

Her sons, now students at Centennial High School, are part of one of the most interesting projects under Lalani’s guidance: the EYE Project - “Empowering Youth Esteem.” This group of 15 area teens, age 14-20, makes presentations about healthy choices regarding sex, tobacco, alcohol, and drugs. They also work with fifth and sixth graders in the “Youth Wrap” program, helping the children develop positive assets as defined by the Assets Initiative, a study that maps out 40 assets that successful children possess which enable them to overcome such obstacles as poverty, abuse, and racism. Giving back to the community is one of those assets. The EYE mentors show the children how to give back not only by their own example, but also by projects the teens and children complete together.

The EYE program has expanded beyond Boise to groups in Mountain Home and Horseshoe Bend; a girl who had been pregnant and was inspired by an EYE presentation started the Horseshoe Bend group. She has since graduated and moved on to college.

“The message is very powerful coming from teens, especially those who have been there,” Lalani says. “Dictating to teens about right and wrong doesn’t work, but teens will listen to other teens. It’s much more effective.”

She recalled an EYE member, a 17-year-old boy, who said during a presentation, “I love my mother and I don’t want to do anything that she will be unhappy about.” Coming from a teen-age boy, it was very moving to the audience, she says, and really made them think.

As the health district’s oral health program coordinator, Lalani works to provide dental care to children living in poverty. Her efforts resulted in a fluoride vanish clinic for children six months to six years receiving WIC services (Women, Infants, and Children program for families with limited income). This new preventative clinic was launched in October 2001. She currently is working to set up a school based dental clinic in McCall, and she promotes dental health in area schools, coordinating the fluoride rinse and sealant programs.

Lalani serves as a preceptor to Boise State University nursing leadership students. Ingrid Brudenell, Associate Professor of Nursing at Boise State, who has placed interns with Lalani says, “She is committed to improving the health and well being of kids in our community.”

Lalani has come halfway around the world, from island tropics to high desert, and her initial “professional setback” has turned into a career that makes life better for Idaho’s children. Her knowledge and compassion led her to view and treat others with dignity and respect. “You need to respect each and every person,” she says. “If everyone did that, it would be such a different world.” That different world is Lalani’s vision of the future. “Reaching teens and kids with prevention messages - sex, drugs, tobacco, alcohol - will bring about a better future,” she notes. Making that better future is Lalani’s way of making history - one child at a time.

ELLIE MCKINNON, Boise State staff
By Anna Fritz

“I believe in human potential, that people are put here for a purpose, that life is sacred and should be joyful and celebrated...” Ellie McKinnon believes what she lives. Whether she’s teaching elementary students to write, tutoring Boise State University students, helping high school students earn college credits, or preserving history through storytelling,
This mother of four and grandmother of five seeks out the best in people, and in life.

As coordinator of the concurrent enrollment program at Boise State, Ellie makes it possible for high school students to earn college credits for taking advanced classes. Students get a leg-up on college, she says, and see themselves differently in a new environment.

It's a new environment for Ellie, too, as she has been on the job only one year. For eleven years before that, she ran the Boise State tutoring program. The student tutors, who she calls "the finest people I've ever worked with," went from ten in number to sixty during Ellie's years at the helm. The program was incredibly rewarding, Ellie says, and she wanted everyone to succeed. One of her favorite teaching jobs was Second Wind, a class for older students returning to school. "It changed people's lives," she says. "They went on to do great things."

"Ellie had lots of love and encouragement for everyone around her," recalls former tutor Sue Chew. "She motivates people to a higher level than they thought they could go. Ellie is developing a new program on campus called Renaissance Institute, a series of short academic classes for older adults interested in life-long learning.

For many years Ellie has been known as a storyteller through the Idaho Commission on the Arts. She researched, wrote, and performs a one-woman play about the historical figures that have rooms named after them in the Boise State Student Union building. "Storytelling is a powerful tool," she says. It is a way to preserve history. You can relate a great deal in a story.

Ellie, also, performs stories from the life of one of her ancestors, a woman named Elizabeth who lived from 1885 to 1995; the stories show how history repeats itself over and over, how we have to keep learning the same things. Ellie uses stories from Elizabeth's life to parallel the present. In another production based on the history of the Northwest, she performed at a national conference, she does the same thing. She tells of a devastating fire in northern Idaho in 1910, and as one character walks through the area two years later, she finds the forest floor is quickly, vibrantly regenerating. She parallels this with the September 11th terrorist attacks - how hope rises from the ashes.

As part of the Guild of Storytellers, Ellie interviewed veterans to "capture their stories." The storytellers gathered oral histories and wrote them into a script, which was performed as an old-style radio program. "People need to have their stories told," she says. "They need recognition for what they did."

Ellie also works as a "writer in the schools" through the Log Cabin Literary Center, currently at Booth Memorial School.

"I approach this as a writer, not as a teacher," she says. She recalls a tremendous experience as a writer in the schools at the Marsing Elementary School literacy lab. She was working with second and third grade children and wanted to help them see into the world beyond their own community. She brought a group of Japanese students from Boise State to share a session. They exchanged paper handprints, and the children told tall tales and acted as hosts, while the Boise State students taught the children Japanese songs and origami.

"The Japanese students spoke little English," Ellie says, "and the children couldn't speak Japanese, but it didn't matter. They just kept playing together, long past the scheduled time.

They didn't want to leave each other.

Beyond all her professional accomplishments, Ellie is most proud of her children, not as much for what they've accomplished as for who they are. She is also proud of her strong 30-year marriage to her husband Dick, former director of housing at Boise State, who died a year ago after a long illness. "Dick was the kind of man who liked people and cared about them; and they liked him. He was an inspiration to me, and I miss him," she adds.

Ellie is a woman who chooses to see hope in her life and in the stories she tells. She is continually inspired by those around her, whether it's the love between her parents, the courage she sees in the faces of the young mothers and mothers-to-be at Booth Memorial School, or seeing herself and Dick in the way their children are living their lives. You find things to do that bring you joy to get through your loss," she says. "Rather than dwell on that loss, use the happiness you had as a starting point and stretch it into the future."

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**IRENE WILCOX, Boise, Idaho**

By Delilah Troia

In 1953 the small town of Boise, Idaho was forever changed by Irene Wilcox, its first clinical social worker. There was no real regard for mental health services at that time, but Irene saw a need for reform. There hadn't been any changes made in the laws regarding child welfare since 1890. Barely recognized as a problem, child abuse had almost no laws for prevention or punishment. For example in 1953, an abused child was turned away by the "system" with little or no assistance available. Even though Irene was joining that system in Boise, she was determined to help people; she wouldn't turn her back.

Irene's educational background is as diverse as her interests. She began her college career at the University of Utah, and then journeyed to San Francisco where she joined the Red Cross. Here her interest in social work blossomed; she worked with many people that genuinely needed help. Irene eventually met her husband in her various travels with the Red Cross and moved to St. Louis, Missouri where he was finishing dental school. There she continued her education, at the highly regarded George Warren Brown School of Social Work. Irene then completed her master's degree at Howard University the first year it was open to white students. She worked in Missouri until they moved.

"One of the first things I will never forget is the first child I placed for adoption (in St. Louis). We really made a study of the families. The staff as a whole made a decision about which families they felt would be best for this particular child. I corresponded with the parents of that child until they recently died," she reminisces.

In 1953, Irene and her husband left St. Louis to make Boise their home. Irene wanted to see a branch of mental health services available to the public. However, she was told there was no need for those types of services - she would prove them wrong.

In a little house on the bank of the river, Irene Wilcox made history for the citizens of Boise. Although the memories rest silently now, the building dwarfed by the commercial buildings that have sprung up around it like weeds, we cannot take for granted the struggles that were made there to improve our system of care.

The small group of social workers was given a modest start. They treated people for free and began to document the type of care that was necessary and lacking in our community. There was a resistance at the time to believe that this small community could be "plagued" with the kind of problems they were seeing and treating. If the walls could speak now, they would tell of unspeakable abuse that was going untended and stories of pain that was not being confronted by the system at that time.
CLARISSE M. MAXWELL, Boise, Idaho

By Katie Mills: Katie is a senior, majoring in English at Boise State. She has served as a student ambassador and works in the student union.

Clarisse Maxwell has a very full life. "I retired from my paying job, but I might have to go back to work to rest," she said with a laugh. Clarisse is a warm, energetic woman who has made lasting impact on Boise. We met on a cold day in a quiet corner, tucked away to talk. She is from Georgia, I learned. "I bet it's warmer there," I said. We chatted for a few minutes and then the room filled with her at the Idaho Human Rights Commission. We both laughed at the coincidence. She asked me about myself, and because she is a wonderful listener and I like to talk, I had to work to keep the conversation focused on her.

Many of her good listening skills may have come from her work as a high school mathematics and geometry teacher. After graduating from Talladega College in Alabama, she went to work in the same high school from which she graduated. "My old teachers were now my colleagues," she said, laughing. In 1980 she moved to Boise to be with her spouse. Once in Boise, however, she found it hard to find a job. She thought it would be easy to find work with all the companies in town, but she was told she was over-qualified at most of the jobs for which she applied. After about a year, she accepted a job with Boise Cascade and worked there for seventeen and a half years before retiring. It was then that she really became busy.

In 1986 she joined the Martin Luther King Jr. Human Rights Task Force. "That was before it became an Idaho holiday," she noted. In 1987, after just one year she became chair of the Governor's task force for the celebration. This work included organizing the annual tribute in the rotunda and working with other task forces around the state. She is now a commissioner for the Idaho Human Rights Commission and helps to review cases and make final decisions on human rights cases - whether or not someone's rights have been violated. "It's difficult at times," she said.

One of her most recent and notable accomplishments was to help create the Idaho Black History Museum. She is a member of St. Paul Baptist Church and attended church in the building in which the museum now resides. The congregation agreed that they needed to get a larger building, but Clarisse and others all agreed that they did not want to see the building destroyed. It was built in 1921 and is one of the last remaining buildings in Idaho to be constructed using black labor. After experiencing many logistical problems and with raising funds, the building was moved to its current location in Julia Davis Park. Clarisse stressed to me the building's historical value; it still has its original stained glass windows, which were perhaps ordered from a catalogue. The building was also placed on the national register of historic places in 1982. More then just the value of the building and the windows, Clarisse feels, is how important it is to understand the role African Americans played in Idaho. She is excited that children can now learn about black history while on trips to the other museums in the park. People from as far away as Russia and England have been to the museum and have learned about this important part of Idaho history.

When discussing Clarisse Maxwell it is difficult not to simply list off accomplishments. Along with the Idaho Black History Museum board and the Idaho Human Rights Commission, Clarisse is also a board member of the Boise Ada Elmore branch of the NAACP, the Ada County Human Rights Task Force, and the Idaho Personnel Commission. "Do you get a chance to rest?" I asked with a laugh, but in slight awe. She does, but relaxing for Clarisse is to be her church's senior programs coordinator.

Clarisse and I parted with her telling me about the current museum exhibit about the Harlem Renaissance, one she thought I would like as an English major. Clarisse Maxwell has accomplished so much and given so much to the state of Idaho. Her work focuses on civility, dignity, and integrity. She brings history closer to people and certainly impacts it by her commitment to create a fair and welcoming place for everyone to live. I was amazed by her accomplishments and amazed to feel so inspired by a person I had only just met. We all owe Clarisse a great debt for her hard work and commitment to education in our state.

Faida Muzaliwa, Boise State student

By Amber Armstrong

Imagine being born in the Democratic Republic of Congo and a few years later, when you are around seven years old, you are told that your father needs to leave the country due to the civil war that is raging on and you will remain with your mother and siblings in Congo. This is the story of 20-year-old Faida Muzaliwa.

The people of Congo received their independence in 1960. They opposed the dictator in power and wanted to overthrow the government, the start of Congo's civil war. Faida's father, who was a professor at a local university, had students in his classes who were protesting the government; it was safer for him to leave the country since he was being associated with the opposition. Eight months later, at the age of seven, Faida, her mother, and siblings followed him to Kenya, where they lived until Faida was thirteen years old. She and her family did not want to stay in Kenya as refugees, but they could not return to Congo. Her parents completed applications and petitioned for political asylum in the United States, where more opportunities awaited them. When Faida was thirteen, a Presbyterian church in Nampa sponsored her family to come to Idaho.

The culture shock of moving from Kenya to Idaho was difficult enough, but Faida also had to deal with the ignorance of those who had little exposure to people from other countries. When she first arrived in Nampa with her family, there was an announcement over the loud speaker at her new school that there was a student from Africa here and that people should "be nice to her." As if this embarrassing introduction was not enough, she was asked by her classmates if she had worn clothes while living in Congo and Kenya, and if there were cars there. She answered them in a smart-aleck way to regain some sense of pride. "Oh, no!" She told them. "I also had a pet zebra," an early insight into her sense of humor.

While her introduction to U.S. schools was a little shocking, she started to find her place as she continued to settle in this new culture. At her high school in Eagle, she had been voted prom queen, was the captain of the cross-country team, and was one of two students to get a Pepsi scholarship after graduation. She still remembers an impact she made on a classmate in high school, a "typical white, small town boy" that was on the cross-country team with her. For the first couple of weeks they never talked. Gradually, they started to nurture a friendship and one day, he shared with her that he had been raised in a racist family and had been taught stereotypical information about people of color. He told her that he had never known a black person on a personal level before; their relationship had helped change the racist views he was holding about people of color. Just by being herself, she had dispelled negative stereotypes and racist myths that are not true. This memory makes her feel good and proud that she was able to touch someone without intending to, just by being herself.

As a college student at Boise State University she values her academics as well as her activities outside of class. Aside from being a good student, she is involved in the student programs board as the comedy coordinator, is a member of the Financial Management Association, and is also involved in planning the Martin Luther King Jr. Human Rights Week Celebration and African Night. She first became involved with the Black Student Alliance, a BSU student organization, when she was in high school, but did not become a member until she began attending Boise State. She was elected vice president for her sophomore year and is currently president as a junior. Along with her leadership duties, she helps get African American students motivated and interested in the Black Student Alliance. Faida has also helped encourage local high school students to go to college through events like Black to the Future, a high school recruitment program that introduces young black students to college life at BSU.

Faida has definitely "come a long way" from the culture shock she first experienced when she moved from Kenya to Idaho. She first had to struggle with English and find a way to overcome the cultural differences while still keeping her own identity. One of her many gifts is to make friends and connect with people easily; by getting involved and connected with others, she has learned how to appreciate and respect the people in the United States, and dispelled stereotypes that some hold about people from other countries.

Faida is a finance and accounting major and hopes to return to Africa one day to help establish businesses there. Her future plans include learning more about world politics and possibly working with the United Nations. Faida has learned through her own experiences that ignorance can divide people. She is currently making history by bringing people together to dispel ignorance and the break down barriers of misunderstanding.

ALMA GOMEZ, Boise State faculty

By Kathleen Mortensen: Kathleen is a public relations officer and journalist for Boise State University. She is the mother of four children and lives in West Boise.

One of artist Alma Gomez's favorite pieces is a painting of her daughter, Angela. True to her Chicana roots, Alma's paintings weave elements of Hispanic and indigenous history and symbolism through her works. Because of this, her art reflects not only the identities of those she paints, but also their very souls.

This particular painting, "Religious Syncretism: Coatlicue, Guadalupe and Angela," incorporates the face of her daughter on the upper body of the Aztec goddess, Coatlicue, and the lower body of Mexico's patron saint, the Virgin of Guadalupe.

"Her face represents my contemporary identity," Alma says. "The other two are indigenous and religious
Alma recalls, "Texas, she earned a bachelor's degree in art. In 1991, she went to the University of Hawai‘i to complete one painting. It's who I am, a person influenced to Mexican art.

"As a reporter, she was able to write many columns about the merging of two worlds - Mexico and the United States. The merging of the three elements is like the religious fusion in 16th century Mesoamerica as well as the formation of my Chicana identity." An adjunct art teacher and a retention counselor for the College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP) at Boise State University, Alma sees her life reflected in her art. Focusing heavily on Cortez’s conversion of the Mexican people to Catholicism in the 16th century, she draws strong comparisons to her own life.

"What really happened was a blending of two religions," says Cortez's efforts to convert the native people to European Catholicism. "I thought of how similar this was to my own experience as a Chicana living in the United States. I thought of my identity in a similar way, as a blending of the Mexican and American cultures. I was born in the United States but have been thoroughly immersed in both cultures."

Alma was raised in Texas by migrant farm worker parents. Always a good student, she didn't really give any thought to higher education until at a point brought some of her paintings to school during a high school career day. "At that point, I decided I wanted to go to college," Alma recalls. "and a counselor told me about CAMP." CAMP is a federal program designed to help sons and daughters of migrant farm workers receive a college education. Enrolling at Pan American University in Edinburg, Texas, she earned a bachelor's degree in art. In 1991, she went to Boise State University, followed by a master of fine arts in 2001. She's used her knowledge to create and reach art in some form or another most of her life, because, she says, "art is not just something I do. It's who I am."

While studying at Boise State, she was reconnected with the CAMP program. In August 1991 she took a job as a part-time counselor, working with students whose backgrounds mirrored her own. A decade later, she continues helping young Hispanic students succeed in ways many never imagined possible. "My hope for them is that they will stay in school, graduate and become professionals," she says. "But more importantly, I want them to grow as individuals and become more confident about who they are - to embrace their ethnicity. For the most part, they are sure of who they are, but as they see other students who are confident of their heritage it helps them become more secure."

Her dedication to students is what prompted her supervisor, Gypsy Hall, to nominate her as an outstanding woman in history. Alma, Gypsy says, often goes above and beyond the call of duty to assist her students.

"She has motivated them to graduate when the going got tough," says in her nomination letter, "encouraged them to explore the beauty of their culture, imparted her wisdom about life, loaned them art supplies and guitar cases when they could not afford them, wept with them, taken them to dances when they were so shy but wanted to embrace the fun, celebrated their academic and personal successes and held their hand in the hospital when they were frightened and in pain."

For her dedication, Alta was awarded an Outstanding Professional award by the National Association of State Directors of Migrant Education. But awards aren't what motivates her. "I've come to love my students, to care for my students, to love my students," she says. "I look out for them and help them whenever I can. It makes me feel like I'm at home."

She also has an artistic connection to her students, many of whom are descended from indigenous cultures such as Mayan, Olmec or Aztec. She has started using some of these students as models for one of her current projects, a series of small canvases where she matches the face of a student with that of an indigenous person. She’s painted four students so far and hopes to eventually have 15 or 20 in the series.

Ultimately, although she loves art, she says her primary responsibility is that of a role model. "Really, I'd love to be where I could walk into a classroom and see lots of brown faces." But in the larger areas with a large Hispanic population there are many professionals. I hope I'll be able to continue teaching here in Idaho where I have something to contribute."

SYLVIA DANA, Boise State Staff

By Anna Fritz

"I feel like I'm in training to make history," smiles Sylvia Dana. "I haven't actually made history yet." Maybe so, but she is off to a good start. Sylvia, a Detroit native and graduate student in education, has packed a lot of living into her 30 years. People have helped her along the way, and her strongest drive is to give back, to pass along to others the love, support, and encouragement she herself has received.

Sylvia comes from a diverse religious background: her grandmother was a devout Christian, her aunt a practicing Muslim, her mother an adherent of paganism who read tea leaves and the I Ching. At 17, Sylvia became a Christian. Being "swept" was the pivotal point in her young life. She graduated from Central Michigan University with a degree in journalism and public relations, and an added bonus, her young son Ezekiel, now seven. As a pregnant, single woman, Sylvia received support from a family who took her in, and a center that helped women in need. When she had her first job as a reporter, she was able to write many columns about the agencies and organizations that helped people in need, including those that helped her. "It was a way to give back to the community that helped me," she says, "and also a way to show them I had made good."

Christianity continued to play a large part in Sylvia's life; she joined a group of friends who were moving to Boise to begin a Christian fellowship group at Boise State University. Driving across the country with 3-year-old Ezekiel, pulling a U-haul trailer, Sylvia began the next phase of her life. She served a two-year stint with Americorps, beginning in Nampa, where she developed early childhood curriculum, tutored children and adults, and worked in the Salvation Army Youth Center. She spent her second service year at Mountain Cove High School, where she taught journalism and coordinated the student newspaper. She also taught the elementary teacher's aide class.

At Boise State, Sylvia has devoted much of her energy and talents to the service-learning program, where she was a graduate assistant. When the program was without a director for nine months, Sylvia ran the program on her own, and in two years has helped over 200 students find service opportunities in their communities.

Wendi Story McFarland, Boise State honors activities coordinator, works with Sylvia through the service-learning program and calls her an inspiration to the feminine spirit. "She is an amazing woman," Wendi says. "She has the ability to hold onto her character when others would choose to give up who and what they are in an attempt to get through difficult times. I find that I am often inspired by her internal greatness. She is a gift to many."

Sylvia is still involved with the service-learning program, creating a documentary to showcase the program to generate awareness and involvement. Her main focus, however, has shifted toward student teaching at Capital High School, where she teaches yearbook, journalism, and English. "It's my dream to teach," she says, "to know at the end of the day that I've given everything I have, yet it fills me up." Sylvia sees her teaching role as more than academic. "I want to teach kids not to let mistakes or obstacles stop them, to be determined to make it regardless of poverty, abuse, or teen pregnancy," she says. "But I also want to help them develop tools and strategies to avoid mistakes in the first place."

Sylvia Dana has not let obstacles or mistakes slow her down: "I have always been a determined person with a resiliency that tells me I can get through anything...but I'm just learning that I'm human and things can knock me down."

As Sylvia looks to the future, she has more plans and goals. She wants to continue her new passion of mountain bike racing. She wants to raise Ezekiel, now in the first grade, to become a good man, to show him how to look for opportunities, to help him develop strength, courage, and his mom’s resilience. She wants to continue to grow spiritually, and to become the best teacher she can be. And someday, she would like to open a women's center like the one in which she lived, back in Michigan.

"Hopefully, that’s when I will make history," Sylvia says. "Until then, I’m in training."