



GEM STATE NEWS

SPRING (February - April) 2026 EDITION



30 Years of Excellence - Congratulations!

This month, we proudly celebrate a **remarkable milestone**, from an incredible team member. Robin has reached her 30th year of dedicated service with GSDC. During this time, Robin has **exemplified excellence, commitment, and leadership**, all the while **leaving a lasting impact** on our organization and the countless individuals and families we serve. We are **deeply grateful** for her **contributions** and **honored to recognize** 30 years of passion, purpose, and professionalism.

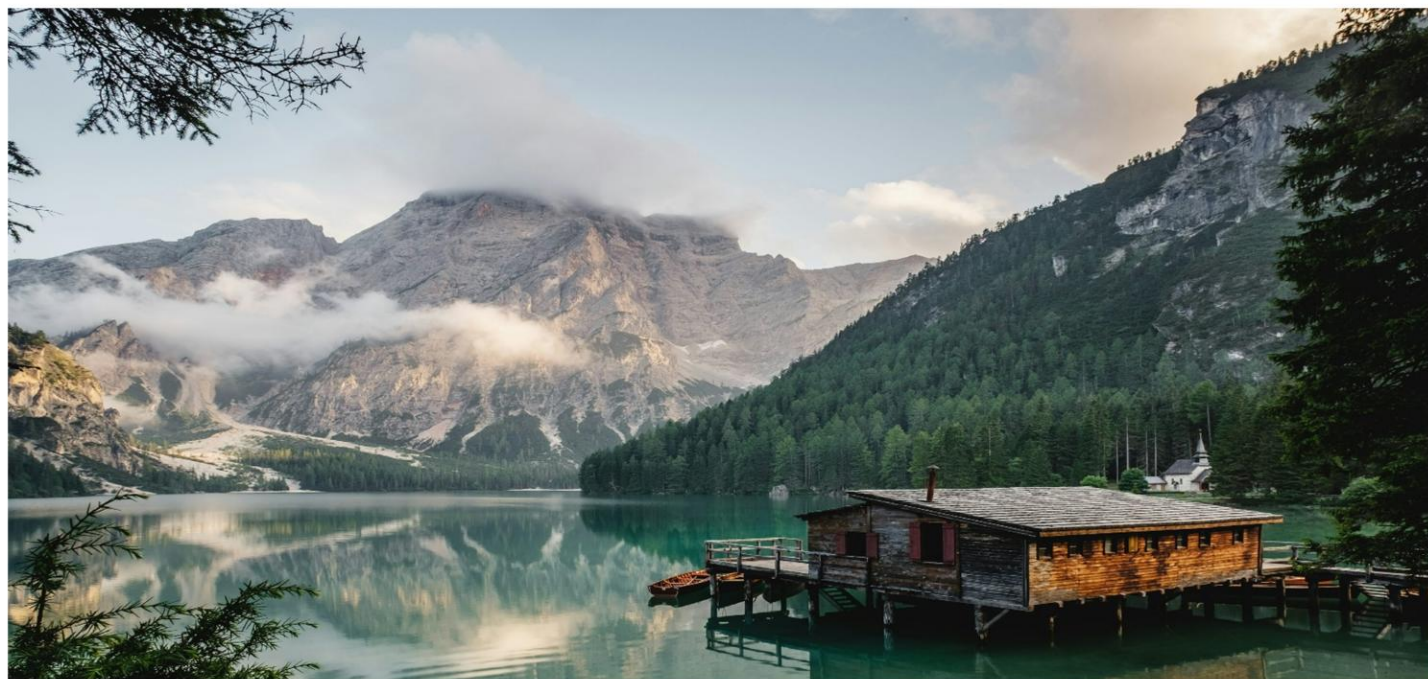


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HUGE SUMMER



WORD SEARCH PUZZLE

AUGUST
BARBECUE
BASEBALL
BEACH
BIKE
BOAT
CAMP
FAMILY
FISHING
FLIGHT
FLIP FLOPS
FLOWERS
FRIENDS
GARDEN
HEAT
HOLIDAYS
HOT
HUMID
ICED TEA
INSIDE
JULY
JUNE
LEMONADE
OUTSIDE
PARK
PICNIC
PLAY
POOL
RELAX
SANDALS
SHORTS
SKATEBOARD
SOCCER
SUNSCREEN
SUNSET
SWIMMING
TAN
TANK TOPS
TENT
THEMEPARK
TOUR
TRAVEL
TRIP
VACATION
WATERPARK

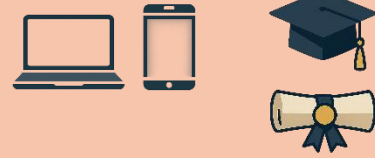
F R I E N D S O C C E R U I F F L S L T
C H O T D K F A M I L Y X V S O K E E S
R B W L V S R E W O L F N W O A M N I G
T A U G U S T A D P Y P I P T O T P A K
A S V S E O D Q P L C M L E N E M R R C
N E U I K Y G I U E M Y B A J F D A Z B
K B I C I I N J M I M O D V Y E P Z H W
T A T E B N I G N U A E R Z N R T R I P
O L S D N S H G P R H I H E E J R D B M
P L S T O I S G D P T K H T L R W S I H
S R A E I D I W S I H F A S U A P S Q O
T E T A T E F Q Y C P W U B A O X T T L
H A E O A R T Y A N Y N A E L F F R A I
K B S T C A J E Q I S R U F D L P O O D
R G N R A M B P X C B E P A I I K H B A
A T U A V W M J R E G I N G R X S S I Y
P A S V H A X E C X L D H U Z U H T D S
R N T E C K E U D F X T G Q J I O K U Z
I V C L E N E J V S L A D N A S A T P O

The words appear UP, DOWN, BACKWARDS, and DIAGONALLY. Find and circle each word.



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Milestones and Moments With Purpose



Congratulations to Jamie W. on completing her Master's degree in Early Childhood Education. This milestone marks the fulfillment of a longtime professional and personal goal, achieved through dedication, perseverance, and many long days of focused effort.

Jamie's commitment to advancing her knowledge and skills reflects her passion for supporting children and families, and her accomplishment will have a lasting impact on the work she does and the communities she serves. We are proud to celebrate this well-earned achievement and wish her continued success in the next chapter of her career.



2026 Graduation and Hooding Ceremonies

Boise State University: [Spring Commencement 2026: Highlight Reel](#)

Northwest Nazarene University: [2026 NNU Traditional Undergraduate Baccalaureate](#)

Congratulations to Hope V.H., and Grace F. on your recent graduations. Emma is still in the MSW program, which she will complete next year.

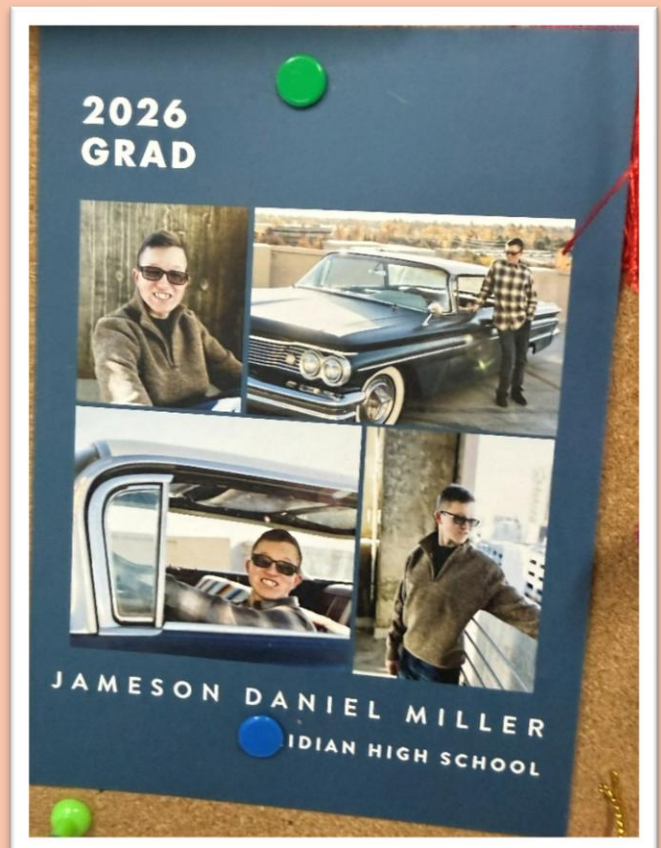
Here we capture a fun moment with our Interns. Their willingness to learn, collaborate, and step into new challenges has strengthened our team and enhanced the services we provide.

Left to right:

Hope V-H, Grace F., & Emma D.



Congratulations J.M., for graduating High School. This is a major milestone because it marks the next step in your journey of many possibilities.



Medicaid is Vital for Disability Services

In January, our staff and participants gathered at the Idaho Capitol Building to support the Medicaid Unite Us Assembly. This year's "Red for Medicaid" theme symbolized unity and advocacy for vital services.

For our participants, community involvement gives them a voice in shaping the programs that support their independence and well-being. Their presence also strengthens the community by raising awareness, fostering inclusion, and reminding us all of the importance of accessible, equitable care.

<https://www.facebook.com/reel/1196085635513467>





We Are the Legacy – Keeping the Dream Alive

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s work helped break down barriers and reminded us that everyone deserves respect. This legacy reinforces the importance of inclusion. It calls us to ensure people of all abilities are valued, supported, and given equal opportunities to succeed.

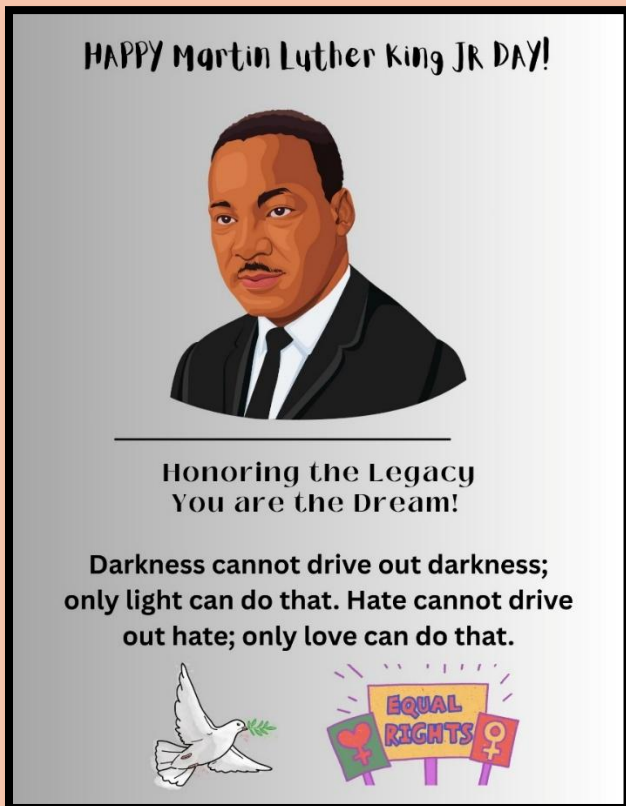
Please check out these links below.

[Martin Luther King Jr. 'I have a dream' speech](#)

[Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial \(U.S. National Park Service\)](#)

[Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Library | District of Columbia Public Library](#)

Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Library



Connecting Today for a Stronger Tomorrow

Our outreach at the BSU Social Work Intern Fair, the 2026 BSW/MSW Career Fair, and the Middleton High School Transition Fair was highly successful. At Boise State University, we connected with many BSW students, supported by staff Julia and Lydia and Interns Emma and Hope, whose presence helped create an engaging and welcoming booth.

The Middleton High School Transition Fair provided valuable support to families navigating the 18-21 transition period and strengthened community partnerships, including conversations with The Belong Co. about upcoming inclusive events like their “Tacky” Prom on April 18. Overall, these events expanded outreach, recruitment, and visibility while reinforcing important community connections.



Supporting Community Food Access



Dear Lori,

I wanted to take a moment to say something very important: "Thank you!"

We are all so grateful for the support and encouragement you've shown to Special Olympics athletes.

Because of you, people with intellectual disabilities have discovered newfound abilities, self-confidence, and joy, both on and off the field.

Your generosity means the world to all our athletes!

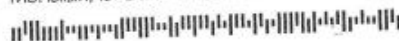
With our deepest gratitude,
Kristi Kraft, President & CEO
Special Olympics Idaho



Special Olympics Idaho
PO Box 541
New Plymouth, ID 83655



Lori Poole
818 NW 15th St
Meridian, ID 83642-3724



175915

Special Olympics provides year-round sports training and athletic competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports for people with intellectual disabilities.

The Idaho Foodbank is the state's largest nonprofit distributor of free food assistance, serving Idaho communities through a network of more than 440 partner agencies statewide. Founded in 1984, the organization provides food for millions of meals each year while promoting nutrition and healthy living. We're grateful for the opportunity to support their mission in small but meaningful ways alongside the broader community working to address food insecurity.

To learn more or get involved, visit www.idahofoodbank.org

or contact their main office at 208-336-9643.

Art Is A Fantastic Expression

Check out this delightful artwork created by Gwen. It is inspired by a still shot from the classic **Dukes of Hazzard** television show. Creating artwork show personal interests and build confidence, encourage self-expression and reflect commitment to recognizing individual strengths.

Admire the stylish representation of Edgar. His sense of fashion is A+. Here he pairs the western cowboy hat with a casual urban look. Fashion is more than clothes; it is a representation of our personalities and the surface indication of our mood for the day.



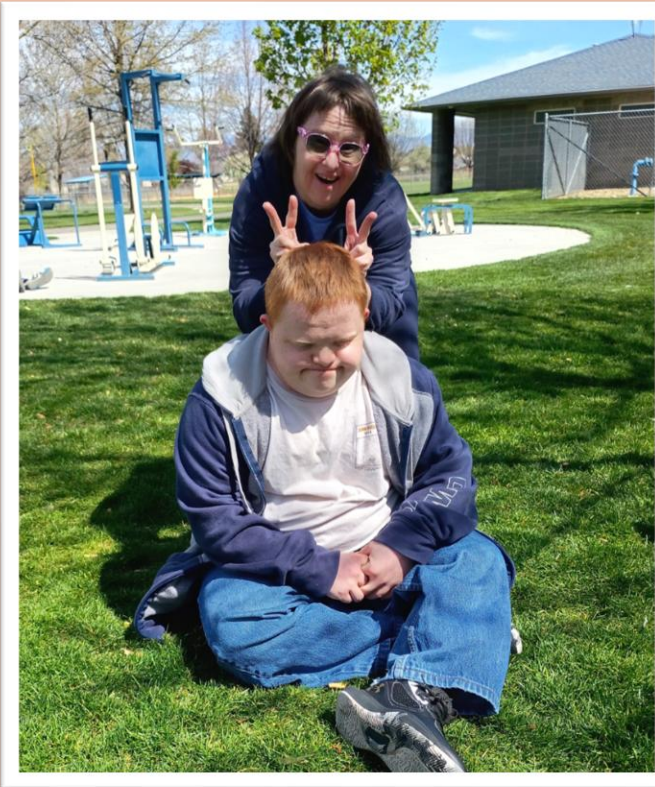
Artistry - Gwen

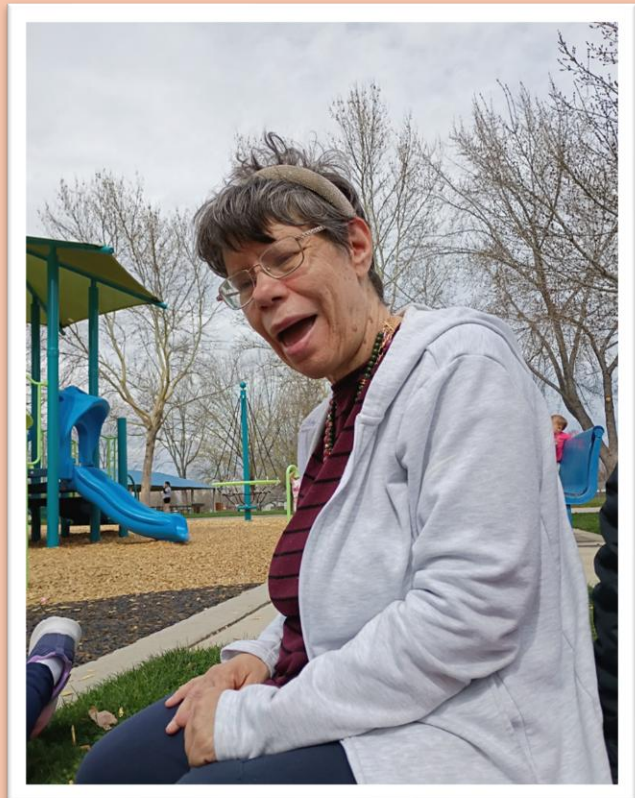
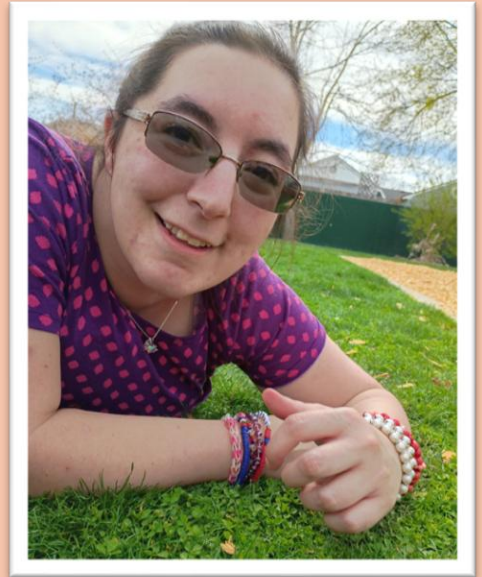


Trend Icon - Edgar

Engaging Minds and Communities: Participants in Action







Spending time in the community allows our participants to engage the world around them—whether visiting a park, shopping at a store, or attending a local event—they are able to practice and strengthen essential social skills in real, meaningful contexts.



A Resource List for Families, Friends, and Allies (Basic)

State & Government Resources

- **Idaho Department of Health & Welfare**
 - Developmental disability programs (children & adults)
 - Medicaid programs (including Katie Beckett)
 - Case management and home/community services [[healthandw...idaho.gov](#)]
- **Idaho 211 (Dial 211)**
 - Connects you to housing, therapy, food, and disability services [[atticus.com](#)]
- **State Independent Living Council (SILC)**
 - Assistive tech, housing help, employment programs, legal resources [[silc.idaho.gov](#)]
- **Idaho Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (IDVR)**
 - Helps individuals with disabilities gain employment [[silc.idaho.gov](#)]

Resource Directories (VERY useful)

- **FindHelpIdaho**
 - 4,000+ programs (therapy, housing, transportation, etc.)
 - Free search tool for local services [[findhelpidaho.org](#)]
- **Boise LIST**
 - Verified directory of local services (including disability support)
 - Includes contact info, eligibility, and categories [[lowincomesupport.org](#)]

Community & Inclusive Programs

- **Treasure Valley YMCA – THRIVE Adaptive Programs**
 - Adaptive camps, sensory-friendly activities, aquatics
 - Supports neurodiverse children and adults [[ymcatvidaho.org](#)]
- **Autism Society of Idaho**
 - Support groups, advocacy, and education for families [[projectspectrum.org](#)]
- Local inclusive programs include:
 - Sensory gyms, play therapy, inclusive dance camps
 - Employment training programs for individuals with disabilities [[boisewithkids.com](#)]

Quick Starting Points (Recommended)

1. Call **211** → immediate guidance to local services
2. Visit **FindHelpIdaho** → broad search tool
3. Contact **Idaho Health & Welfare** → eligibility for major programs
4. Reach out to a **DDA (like RISE or Foundations)** → ongoing support