



The Idaho Lives Project State Department of Education Representatives* and Contract Staff**

Matt McCarter* – Project Director

Matt McCarter moved to Boise from Seattle, Washington in 2002 to manage the City of Boise's Healthy Community* Healthy Youth Initiative in the Mayor's office. Prior to his time in Boise he earned a B.A. from Western Washington University, served as an AmeriCorps member, managed the Seattle Police Department's Volunteer program and funded community efforts to prevent substance abuse and violence among youth as a Community Organizer for King County Government in Washington State. He holds a Master's degree in Communication from Boise State University and currently serves as the Director of Student Engagement, Career & Technical Readiness Division at the Idaho State Department of Education. Idaho's beautiful country and great people are an ideal setting for Matt to raise his two kids.

Jean Hilton* – Administrative Assistant

Jean Hilton is 'Idaho grown' and during her childhood, she ran around in the woods of northern Idaho. Military service called her away for a number of years, but when it was finally time to return to her roots, she chose to live in Emmett with her two children. She earned her Associate's degree in Business Management and Accounting from the University of Alaska and has been involved in education in some form for the past 15 years. She was very excited to become part of the State Department team in April 2017.

Katie Walker – Program Director**

Katie Walker is the Program Director for the Idaho Lives Project, which fosters strength and resilience among Idaho youth. She began her work in suicide prevention in 2008 with Suicide Prevention Network of Idaho (SPAN Idaho). She has previously worked for the Idaho Lives Project and is a certified Sources of Strength trainer. Katie has worked as a teacher in the Boise School District for over 18 years. She has a Bachelors in Education from Boise State University and a Masters in Educational Administration from University of Idaho. Katie lives in Boise with her husband- the teacher/runner extraordinaire, her son and daughter, and her old, loyal dog Gerald. Her oldest daughter is attending graduate school in Virginia.

Judy Gabert – Senior Program Specialist**

Judy Gabert, MA, MEd is the Senior Program Specialist with the Idaho Lives Project. Judy worked as a teacher and school counselor for Boise School District, where she became interested in suicide prevention. She helped to write and present the first suicide prevention plan for the District with a committee that included Dr. Peter Wolheim, who was a major promoter of suicide prevention for Idaho.

Judy joined SPAN Idaho in 2009 as a resource specialist, and in 2013, together with Kim Kane and Matt McCarter of the Idaho State Department of Education (SDE), they wrote for and were awarded the Garrett Lee Smith grant and created the Idaho Lives Project with Sources of Strength for Idaho schools at its core. Judy lives in Nampa on a mini-farm with her husband and cats and dog.

Andrea Eschen – Program Specialist**

Andrea Eschen is a Program Specialist with the Idaho Lives Project. Her responsibilities with ILP include scheduling, training, and providing support for schools that are part of the Sources of Strength Program. Andrea is passionate about uniting people and building communities to create well-rounded, equitable, and accessible educational experiences for young people. Her Master's Degrees in Education and Social Work have offered Andrea extensive experiences working with K-12 students as both an educator and a mental health counselor. If you are hoping to touch base with Andrea and can't reach her by phone or email, you will likely find her in a quaint local bookstore, finishing her 6th cup of coffee, while searching for a book that will help curb her near-uncontrollable-urge to cheat while playing board games with her husband and two young daughters.

Laurie Brenchley – Regional Coordinator**

Laurie Brenchley is a Regional Coordinator for the Idaho Lives Project. She currently serves as the Suicide Prevention Action Network (SPAN) Chairperson for Idaho Region 6, and on the Children's Mental Health Subcommittee as part of the Region 6 Behavioral Health Board. She has two Associate's Degrees from BYU-Idaho and a Bachelor's Degree in Political Science from Idaho State University. She currently lives in Pocatello with her husband, daughter, and son. Her positive outlook and laugh are infectious.

Ali Shields – Regional Coordinator**

Ali Shields is a Regional Coordinator for the Idaho Lives Project. She is excited to have joined this agency and be a part of instilling hope, strength, and resilience in Idaho's youth. In 2009, she began her work in both mental health and suicide intervention when she became employed as a Psychiatric Technician for Intermountain Hospital. Since then, her passion for suicide prevention expanded, and she began seeking a degree in Social Work with an emphasis on suicide intervention/prevention. In 2017, she received her Idaho State licensure and is a Licensed Master Social Worker. Ali completed her graduate-level internship with St. Luke's Children's Hospital and worked heavily with the suicidal adolescent population. From this experience, she found both a passion for working with youth affected by suicidal ideations but also the need for improved suicide prevention strategies in Idaho. Ali has her Bachelors in Social Work from Boise State University, as well as her Masters in Social Work, with a specialization in Community Mental Health, from Northwest Nazarene University. She lives in Boise with her husband and dogs.

Nancy Schmidt – Regional Coordinator**

Nancy Schmidt is a Regional Coordinator for the Idaho Lives Project. She moved to Sandpoint Idaho from Pittsburgh Pennsylvania in 2006 and found her home in north Idaho (Sandpoint). Nancy has been involved in health and wellness promotion in a variety of areas for over 20 years. She earned her Master's in Health Education from Penn State University and gained a counseling certificate in Addiction Studies. She was a Health Educator for Chatham College where she found her passion working with

young adults. She went on to earn her PhD in Psychiatric Epidemiology at the University of Pittsburgh where she was employed as a Substance Abuse Prevention Specialist before receiving a fellowship from the National Institute of Health to complete her dissertation in 2002. Nancy enjoys working with young adults, helping them to discover what inspires and motivates them and their passions and supports them in their discovery process. She has been instrumental in helping at risk youth discover meaning and purpose in their lives and helping to promote lifelong learning opportunities.

Nancy loves the outdoors and was a competitive runner, having completed 52 marathons and numerous other racing events including triathlons and a handful of ultra-marathons. Nancy is an avid cyclist and squash and tennis player and loves to ski and snowshoe in the winter months. Nancy, and the love of her life, her dog Riley, enjoy exploring the mountains in north Idaho and Montana and Nancy loves sharing her love of the outdoors and physical activity with the young adults she is involved with.