



Black Hills  
WOMAN

MAGAZINE

SIGNING


*off*

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# Black Hills WOMAN

MAGAZINE

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# Signing Off



Joyful readers browse through Black Hills Woman Magazine during their hair appointments, dentists appointments, or while in line at the grocery store. Women pick up a copy of the magazine and slide it into their purse for future perusing or to share an issue with a friend or family member. People featured in the magazine comment about how they feel famous from the publicity they receive from being highlighted on the shiny pages of the magazine. Local businesses are grateful for the home-grown, word-of-mouth-nature of the articles telling their story. The pages are filled with heartfelt words from local women writers who invest themselves into the stories they tell. It only takes days before shelves of Black Hills Woman Magazines are emptied at local businesses, shoppers compelled to grab an issue after taking a peek at the cover photography.

The magazine has morphed from the time I purchased it – a new logo, a new website, new designer, new writers, and even a new shape/size. I'm really, really proud of BHW. I'm especially proud of the women (and one very talented male photographer) behind this magazine. From content design, content creation, writing articles, editing articles, scheduling cover photoshoots, editing beautiful cover photography ... and so (so, so) much more ... BHW is a labor of love.

While BHW has brought me (and I hope you) an abundance of joy, an outlet for creativity, an opportunity to connect further with the community, and many other gifts, this issue (April) will be my last. I don't know what's ahead for BHW. Maybe one of you reading this feels a calling to continue the joyful work of celebrating the women, culture, and businesses of the Black Hills. For me, though, I'm signing off.

As a reader, I hope you've learned about a woman (or many) deserving of recognition, you've read a story that made you look at something differently, you've made a purchase at a small business because you read about their story, you've laughed out loud while reading a humorous article, you've tried a new recipe, and/or you've learned something new. I look forward to picking up the next issue of BHW from a new owner's perspective.

There's so much more to be written.

Stay tuned.



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# A Journey to Sobriety

*with Alicen Dupont*

BY MADIGAN SCHMITZ

As writers and journalists, it's often hard to see how our work directly impacts our readers, and we never truly understand how what we write can affect people. For Alicen Dupont, a Black Hills Woman reader, an article in the magazine helped her begin a journey to sobriety. A year and some change later, it's Alicen's turn to share her own story.

Dupont and her husband were featured in a Black Hills Woman article in 2022, and while she was proud to be featured in the magazine with her husband to share about their business, the picture used for the article brought up some hard memories for her.

Dupont shared in a Facebook post that she was extremely hungover on the day of the photoshoot. The



night before she had gone out for drinks with a girlfriend, and came home to drink even more. After waking up sick, she showed up not looking or feeling her best.

In the BHW issue that came out the following month, the cover story featured a Black Hills area woman that was on her sobriety journey, and was 1000 days sober.

For Dupont, this article was a sign for her. She ultimately realized that she wanted to quit drinking.

The article she read came out in March, and in December of 2022 she made the decision to begin her own journey to sobriety. Alicen took her last sip of alcohol as the ball dropped on December 31st.

“My niece in December 2022 had left for a deployment to Iraq. She was in Texas preparing, and I thought this was a good motivation. I sent her a text about doing a challenge where I wouldn’t

drink while she was deployed. There were 2 weeks before she left where I drank all the wine I could find, and I’ve not gone back. She got home in September and my friends expected me to drink again, but I just couldn’t.” said Dupont.

At the beginning of her journey, Dupont didn’t deny the difficulty. With several trips planned

within the first 6 months of her sobriety, along with her oldest daughter turning 21, and counting the dinners and girls nights that often include alcohol, the start of sobriety did not

come without its challenges for Dupont.

“There was a lot of self isolating, I didn’t socialize as much as I do now,” she said. “Now I have no problem going out to dinner with friends, but at first I declined invitations more. Lots of sobriety podcasts, sober Tik Toks and social media, along with a

*As these challenges  
arose, Dupont  
had an amazing  
support system in  
her family.*





lot of self reflection. We had a vacation to Nashville already booked prior to me deciding to quit drinking. 3 weeks into quitting. That was hard. 1 of 12 people there that weren't drinking, and that's all you do in Nashville is drink. It was a big growing experience for me."

As these challenges arose, Dupont had an amazing support system in her family. It helped motivate her to continue on her journey not only for them, but for her niece that was overseas as well.

"If my 18 year old niece can be deployed to Iraq, I can not drink," said Dupont.

Now that Dupont is more than a year sober, she is beyond happy and able to feel like the best version of herself. Not just for her family, but for her.

"I'm always able to feel my best, and never have to plan around being hungover. My bff doesn't live in town, and we were trying to figure out when to get coffee, and I remember having to plan around that when I was drinking. I'm always available for my kids and my family. We had a couple hard times in 2023 that would've been a lot harder had I been drinking. I think I would've been less available," she said.

Reflecting back on her life prior to quitting drinking, the only thing Dupont would change is that she wishes she'd quit sooner. Sharing her sobriety experience through social media helped her connect with other women who were also working towards sobriety, and getting to relate to them was an important aspect of her journey. Now that she is 420 days sober and counting,



# Focus on today. *Just one day at a time.*

she wants other people on their sobriety journey to know that progress isn't linear, and that there will be ups and downs, but it will always be a journey that's worth it.

"Focus on today. Just one day at a time. Don't focus on the big picture, and don't say you're never going to drink again. Be patient with yourself, with your body, and people adapting to a

new version of you. Over time people started noticing differences in me, but it didn't happen in the first 60-90 days. You don't need to drink to enjoy yourself and to enjoy your family and friends, if you do, you're probably not surrounding yourself with the right people, and it's okay to be the odd man out to be a better version of yourself," said Dupont.

## **April is Child Abuse Awareness and Prevention Month!**



April 26th, we at Seventh Circuit CASA will be holding an event to bring awareness to the organizations in our community working to prevent child abuse!



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The pinwheel is the national symbol for child abuse prevention, it represents playfulness, joy, and childhood. It serves as a physical reminder of the great childhoods we want for every child.



FINALLY A

# Barbie

THAT LOOKS LIKE ME

I blame my lack of success in adulthood on the mediocre dolls of my youth. I have to blame it on something and that beats blaming me. Barbie dolls have been inspiring young girls for generations but I never had one. My dolls and I could never live up to Barbie's perfect good looks, her globetrotting, and her amazing career success. It's really no wonder they made a movie about her.

She's had 250 careers, from astronaut to ballerina to zoologist. She's been a yoga teacher, a soccer coach, and an Olympic skier. And even with her hectic work life, she's still found time for travel and hobbies. She cooks, camps, and bowls. She plays tennis, baseball, basketball, hockey, and volleyball and she has the clothes to prove it all.

Dr. Barbie, Farmer Barbie, Pop Star Barbie. Barbie's message has always been that girls can grow up to do

whatever they set their minds to—as long as they have the right wardrobe.

Meanwhile my inspiration was a couple of Barbie wannabes. I loved them dearly, but they were not multi-talented overachievers like Barbie is, not if their clothes were any indication. I made many of their dresses myself using worn out socks. What kind of career can a doll have wearing old socks? That might explain why I work at home wearing sweatpants.

But maybe there's a Barbie in my future. Barbara Millicent Roberts—Barbie—made her debut on March 9, 1959. Yes, Barbie's turning 65. And you know what that means. Here comes Medicare Barbie!

Why not? She may have a few age spots from her years in the sun as Beach Volleyball Barbie. And her figure might be less like an hourglass and more like a juice glass. But she'll

still look fabulous in a cardigan, stretch denim jeans, and loafers. Yes, Medicare Barbie will wear sensible shoes. Wisdom comes with age. So do bunions.

If Barbie can grow older, so can her clone friends. I see Winter in New York Barbie aging into Hot Flash Barbie. When you least expect it, her face will turn bright red and sweat beads will form on her brow. Hot Flash Barbie will come with an assortment of tank tops, an iced tea, and a fan.

And Tennis Barbie will naturally mature into Pickleball Barbie. She'll come decked out in leggings, a knee brace and a baggy T-shirt that says, "Pickle Ball: The Real Dill."

Camping Barbie had her backpack and sleeping bag. Now she'll settle into a new role as Camp Host Barbie with a comfy lawn chair, a welcome sign, and a fabulous motorhome.

Obviously, between her extensive travel and her many careers, Barbie didn't have time for children. So she'll skip straight to Grandma Barbie, complete with two small children, reading glasses and an AARP tote bag.

But wait! There's more. Our new mature Barbie and her clone pals will come together in Medicare Barbie, the movie. During one of their regular coffee dates Medicare Barbie will reveal to her friends that she's having a late midlife crisis. Hilarity will ensue as they all become human and get colonoscopies, mammograms, and matching tattoos. Then Barbie will find new purpose traveling the country to educate women every-

where about the importance of a healthy body image and the dangers of high heels. Now there's something to aspire to.



**DOROTHY ROSBY**  
would like to add that Medicare Ken will be sold separately.

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## MAYA ANJALI BUCHANAN

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# 100 Years

*Rapid City Area Schools*

BY SARAH GRASSEL

Rapid City has more than 100 years of history in education. One proud Central High School Cobbler graduate, Sarah Gross, dug into the archives and recently shared a small fraction of that history with the community.

“A little over a year ago, a few friends and I realized that the oldest building in the Rapid City area school district would be turning 100 in 2023,” Sarah explains.

Sarah is currently involved in the school district as the Information Media Specialist at South Park Elementary. She is nationally board certified and holds a doctoral degree from the University of South Dakota in educational leadership.

Her friends, Michael Birkeland, Ruthie Conway, and Jean Kessloff are also all graduates from the school district and are still involved in the education system today. Together, they all recognized the history of the east side of the Rapid City High School building that was built in 1923. Construction continued until the mid 30s.

After that discovery, the group along with the Citywide Parent Teachers Association and Rapid City Teachers Association began a project to showcase the complete history of



the schools in Rapid City. Sarah says, “We found the post-war school study done by the Historic Preservation Commission of Rapid City that was conducted in 2022 to analyze buildings for preservation purposes.”

The amount of information in that study alone gave life to a two part project - the centennial celebration that took place this last fall and a film festival that was just hosted this February. Each film was between five and ten minutes and focused on the specific infrastructure changes throughout the years. There was also a 30-minute film that was created in partnership with the YMCA's Youth Institute.

“The educational goal was to find the building history, interview former students/staff, and then create the film itself,” Sarah says. “There wasn't a designated person at each school, and who took on the project on a voluntary basis, varied from fifth grade teachers, information media teachers, computer teachers, and more.” Schools had complete freedom in format and style but the overall goal was the same: share the history.

At the end of the festival, awards were given out for best overall film and people's choice award.



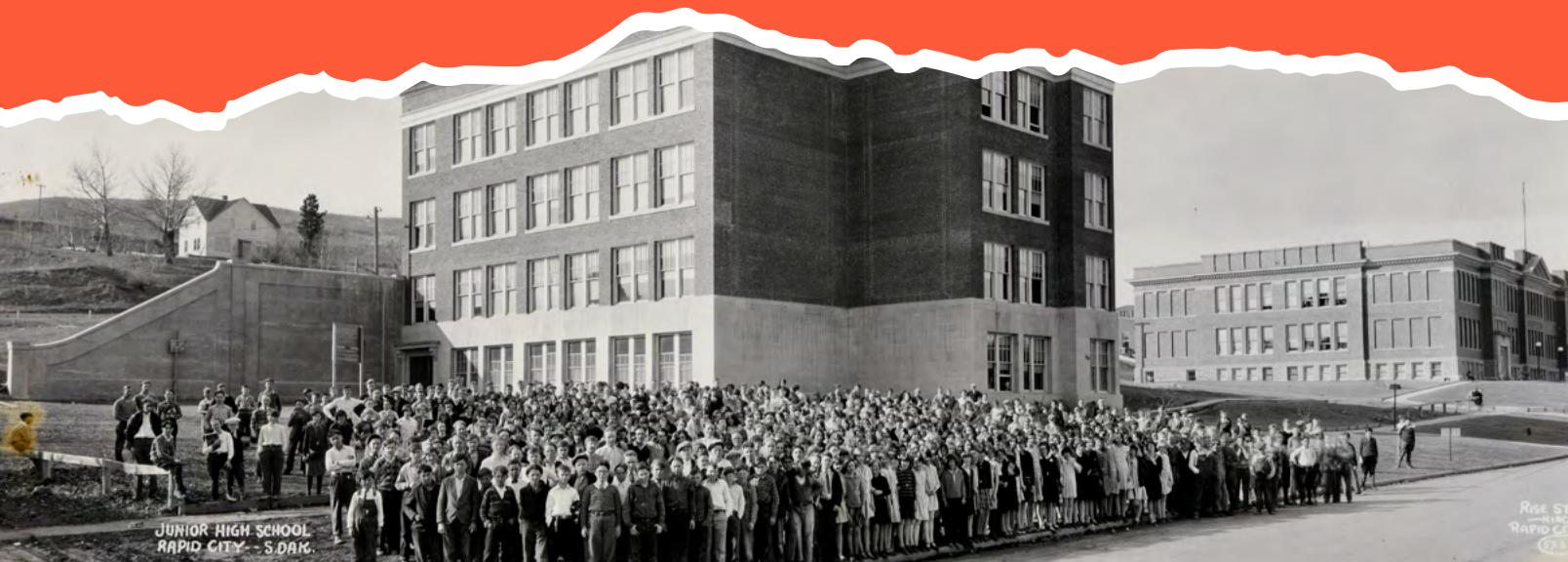
# Major Building Milestones in the Last 100 Years

Narrowing down a handful of events in the last 100 years was quite the challenge. In 146 years of education from the historic building on Columbus Street to the 11 red brick schools built in the 50s during the expansion all the way to the brand new middle school, there is a lot of history to discover in Rapid City. Sarah and her team discussed it, and ultimately came up with these major milestones.

1. Population Growth of the 50s
2. Senate Bill 130
3. The 1970 Washington Building Fire
4. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)
5. Failure of the 1991 Bond
6. Introduction of Technology

All of these events made major impacts to the future of education in the community. Unpacking them a little, Sarah starts, “The growth in Rapid City in the 40s and 50s was largely credited to the opening of the Ellsworth Air Force base which required the district to rapidly build new space for students.”

Sarah believes that the more the history is unpacked, the better the community can understand the amazing assets that are in our town. “Public education has served Rapid City since 1878 when just a small number of students required an instructor. Schools are the places that welcome every student regardless of ability, income, or appearance. They provide an opportunity for





# Bond fails

■ Rapid City School District now must look at school crowding options.

By Erin Andersen  
Journal Staff Writer

Taxpayers will not be forced to foot the bill for a \$20.7 million high school, but it will now be up to them to help find a creative and less costly way to solve the Rapid City School District's crowding problems.

"We may have voted away a building, but we haven't voted away the problem," said Sid Goss, chairman of the We Need Three Committee, after Tuesday's bond election. "Those kids have to be put some place. We haven't voted away the kids."

Precinct  
vote  
tabulations,  
election day  
photos

— Page C1

By almost a two-to-one margin voters said no to the proposed third high school. The final tally was 4,568 — or 36.8 percent — voting in favor, compared with 7,839 — or 63.2 percent — voting against it.

The bond issue needed 60 percent approval to pass. Approximately 30 percent of the district's 41,647 registered voters cast ballots.

School board President Terry Nelson said he was not surprised by the defeat and said another bond issue would not be brought to the voters anytime soon. He encouraged those who voted against the bond issue to

See Bond on page A2

change their status in life through education," Sarah adds.

During the 60s, when the senate passed Bill 130, Pennington County alone consisted of around 80 school districts. The legislative act required a massive reorganization which led to the consolidation and dissolution of at least 19 smaller districts that were absorbed by Rapid City giving the community the district boundaries that still exist today.

Moving into the 70s, another act was passed to improve all children's experiences. "The IDEA was not specific to South Dakota or Rapid City, but this law changed the landscape of who is included in the schools," Sarah says. "Prior to this law, only one in five handicap children even attended school according to records."

A little closer to recent history is the failure of the bond for a third high school in 1991 and the introduction of technology in the Janklow years. Sarah adds, "Population wise, Central High School is larger than 85 percent of towns in South Dakota. Approving a third high school, in my opinion, would have given more students a place to fit into the high school setting."

Who knows what the future of the district holds, but one thing is certain in Sarah's mind, "As we design our town, investments in our schools speak loudly as to who we are and how we value all of our children."

The Public School

## REPORTER

Special E-B Day Edition

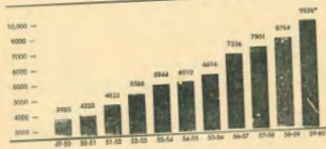
Volume 1 Number 1

Rapid City (South Dakota) Public Schools

February 3, 1989

### Instructional Program Meets Challenge

ENROLLMENTS TRIPLED IN TEN YEARS



Enrollment increased as illustrated by the graph above. From 1982 students in the Rapid City Public Schools have grown to include an estimated 10,918. Projections to include an estimated 12,000 in 1990.

### Stepped-Up Classes Are Inaugurated

"Stepped-up classes" is the title of the program offered this year to the Rapid City junior and senior high school academically talented students for the first time. In essence, the program is geared to more adequately challenge the gifted student to work more nearly up to his capacity.

The three areas chosen for stepped-up classes include mathematics, English and social studies. Sixteen classes featuring more advanced work in these areas are in operation at Main Junior-Senior High and West Junior High.

The stepped-up classes in mathematics begin in the 7th grade. Seventh graders take two years of arithmetic in one so they'll be ready to take algebra in the 8th grade. This will free them as seniors to take a mathematics course for advanced standing. This course will permit the student to go immediately into more complicated mathematics courses when he enrolls in college.

(Continued on Page 2)

### Rapid City Students Receive High Scores On Iowa Tests

The Iowa Tests of Educational Development serve as one basis for evaluating the instructional program.

Tests in social studies; natural science; written expression; quantitative thinking; interpretation of social studies; natural science and literature; and general vocabulary reveal each student's strengths and weaknesses.

Test results are used by teachers and students to evaluate academic progress.

The percentile rankings of Rapid City students are quite revealing. On a national basis, the sophomores rank at the ninety-third percentile; the juniors rank at the ninth-tenth percentile; and the seniors rank at the ninety-sixth percentile.

"Our instructional program must meet the challenge of the latest age," said Superintendent Paul C. Stevens as he addressed the leaders of the Rapid City Public Schools at their first general meeting on September 2. Stevens then outlined a twelve-point program to emphasize the instructional program for the 1988-89 school year.

The organizational pattern of the city schools falls into three inter-related categories: junior high and senior high, Cradley kindergarten through six, and the elementary school. Grades seven through nine comprise the junior high school and grades ten through twelve encompass the high school.

Included in the elementary school curriculum are: total subjects, world understanding, citizenship, physical development and enrichment. Varying amounts of time are used for these five general areas of learning according to the needs of the various grade levels.

### Junior High Program

A major concern of the junior high school program is one of transition from a one-teacher situation in the elementary grades to a multi-teacher situation in the high school. This is accomplished by using what is known as a block-time arrangement. Seventh graders may have one instructor teach two or three related subjects. As the student progresses through the 8th and 9th grades, he is taught by more individual teachers and by the time he becomes a high school student, he is oriented to the one teacher per subject situation.

(Continued on Page 3)



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# CORNHOLE

# APRIL 25-27



# A New Path

WITH RACHEL LYNN

BY SARAH GRASSEL

*An unlikely turn of events for orthopedic surgeon Rachel Lynn, turned into a lifesaving diagnosis and a completely new path.*

Originally from Ohio, Rachel moved to the Hills in the summer of 2021 to begin working her first position as an attending orthopedic surgeon.

“I was excited to start at Monument Health, a job I had contracted two years prior to graduation,” Rachel shares. “I would perform hip and knee replacements, fix broken bones, cast clubfeet in children, relieve compressed nerves, as well as, treat pediatric and hand related injuries.”

Rachel was inspired by her mom at an early age. She dreamed of being a surgeon as early as sixth grade. Rachel explains, “It was a ‘take your daughter to work day’ that solidified it for me. My mom worked as an assistant to a plastic surgeon where I was able to follow her into surgery.”

*“I knew I wanted to be that person, fixing and repairing the patient, and commanding the pace of the room.”*

That was the moment Rachel knew what she truly wanted; she was hooked.

While surgery was always the goal, it wasn't until medical school that Rachel came to realize that orthopedic surgery was where she wanted to direct her career path. “I enjoyed the complete reconstructive aspect of it. Fixing what was broken or relieving pain and improving function from arthritic joints was what I enjoyed most,” she says.

Unfortunately, Rachel's work as a surgeon came to an abrupt and unpredictable end just one year later. Going to bed early one evening, Rachel woke around 10pm with the inability to move or feel her right arm. Not thinking much about it, she drifted off to sleep again.

A few short hours later she woke to feel the same feeling in not just her arm, but her leg as well. It was at that time that Rachel knew something was wrong. Rachel explains, “Dumbfounded, I slowly lifted my left hand up to my face and attempted to smile. Only the left side of my face lifted, total asymmetry. That's



the moment I realized I was having a stroke. I grabbed my phone and dialed 911.”

Rachel’s stroke came only seven months after her mother’s passing in 2022 and was a very traumatic experience. Flashbacks taunted her of her mother’s passing, and a new future awaited her, a totally different life than she had ever planned.

“Meeting me now, no one could have guessed I had a stroke, and I am beyond grateful for the medical

interventions made,” Rachel expresses. The road to recovery has not been easy, though. Stroke recovery includes cognitive, physical, and occupational therapy. All of which Rachel is still going through with today.

Rachel shares, “My right side is still higher tone, and easily fatigued, and I get severe cognitive fatigue about mid day. But for what I could have been left with, I am grateful for my recovery.”

## *Finding Her Why & Choosing A New Path*

Following the sudden stroke at an early age, Rachel needed to know more about what happened. Doctors didn’t have many ideas outside of a possible birth control side effect, but that didn’t seem likely in Rachel’s opinion. She wasn’t the only one that felt that way, either. “I reached out to my primary care doctor and she agreed,” Rachel adds.

The two decided that Rachel should go to a Mayo Clinic genetic cardiologist in connection to her mom’s recent sudden cardiac event. Rachel’s post-stroke heart also indicated that she was in heart failure.

Eventually, it was discovered that Rachel has a genetic laminopathy. That means she is missing a gene that codes for a protein in cardiac muscle. It is passed down through generations as an autosomal dominant condition and it was the missing link to Rachel’s family history.

Rachel says, “It took 4 generations to discover this. So in a way I am grateful for my stroke, otherwise I would have met the same fate as they did, sudden death too soon.”

Since the diagnosis, Rachel now has to take more than 20 medications a day and has a cardiac defibrillator



placed for the day when she goes into complete heart failure. Ultimately, the genetic condition results in death or a heart transplant, but there are some gene therapy trials that keep hope at the forefront.

Up until the diagnosis of her condition, Rachel had been able to return to surgery, with some changes. A little slower in the operating room and adjusting time in her schedule to fit in more naps and rest-time, the heart condition changed everything again.

“I had been forced to be very open about my health condition to my employers, and they saw the writing on the wall before I did. And thus, they let me go quite suddenly. Once I got my defibrillator I could no longer operate since the cautery (device to coagulate blood/stop bleeding) we use in surgery would have a high risk of setting off my cardiac device,” Rachel adds.


It was hard to let go of a career she

had just begun, a career she had dreamed of, and the patients she never had the chance to say goodbye to.

But, Rachel took the time to find a new path for herself. She smiles, “Since the onset of these medical conditions and the end of my career, I have chosen to live my life to the fullest.”

Early in medical school, Rachel found her way in yoga as a way to manage stress and eventually enrolled in a training program so she could teach yoga. Only teaching for about eight months, she hung up her hobby to focus on her medical career, but returned to the studio last year teaching once more at Sol Vibe in Rapid City. Yoga has been incredibly healing and was something that Rachel felt was needed in her life.

She adds, “After not being able to work anymore, my passion of helping others and giving back to my community was yet another loss. With



***FUN FACT:**  
Rachel got her  
scuba diving  
certification  
after her stroke  
and loves to  
travel.*

teaching yoga, I could restore that bit of passion back into my life as well.”

The switch was a little nerve-wracking but it proved to be like riding a bike. Rachel started to remember the transitions and poses and is thrilled to be back in the studio as a teacher again.

Rachel is also currently attempting to write a memoir while juggling her new career path and being an incredible part-time mom to her partner’s children. Outside of teaching, she enjoys volunteering at Corral Drive elementary and the Dahl Arts Center, hiking, learning pottery, and home renovation projects.

For all other surgeons and medical professionals out there, Rachel wants to also express the importance of investing in disability insurance. Getting hers through a private company at the advice of another physician who spoke in a med school class, Rachel credits the insurance for saving her and allowing her to live the life she is now despite the end of her career. The insurance is something she had in place years before the stroke, and was helpful when her stroke and heart condition prevented her from being a surgeon.

## MAY IS MELANOMA AWARENESS MONTH AND MELANOMA MONDAY



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# BORDER PAWS RESCUE

*For the Love of Dogs*



BY JAMIE WRIGHT

Shaila Dominguez, 22 year old, is the owner of Border Paws Dog Rescue. In 2016, she saw a dog on Facebook. The pup was 7-year-old Hazel, who had heart worms. Days had passed since seeing her pictures, and Dominguez could not get the sweet face out of her mind. She asked her mom, never expecting her to say yes, to have the dog transported to her. The rest is history, leading to the birth of Border Paws Rescue and what Dominguez hopes to be a full-on career.



Hazel came from one of the southern states of our country, where, unfortunately, the stray dog population is devastatingly overwhelming. The man Dominguez adopted Hazel from worked with these dogs to transport them north where this issue is not so prevalent in hopes of finding a loving home. That's when the doggy gates opened for Dominguez.

The connection brought endless Facebook messages asking if she could take in more dogs; she agreed to take a few and found them homes. Others from the South were messaging her for the same reason. In 2021, she re-homed seven dogs; in 2023, she helped 234. This was on top of working a part-time job and attending classes through South Dakota State University at the hospital to be a respiratory therapist.

“The dogs consumed all of me,” she says. “So, something had to go, and it was not going to be the dogs. I stopped school and picked up another part-time job at a dog park. Something a lot of people don't know is a lot of people do this [rescue and transport dogs] for the money, and that was a hard realization for me to come to terms with. People don't understand we are not like a humane society who has government support and paid employees to operate a facility full time; we're not like that. For the last three and a half years, Border Paws has strictly been on a volunteer basis. I am just now able to pay myself a small amount





for my time and efforts, and one day, I really hope it can be a full-time job, but it will not be at the expense of our dogs. It has just never been about the money for me; I mean, it hasn't been about the money for over three years, and honestly, even I'm surprised how much this thing kind of blew up. I never, ever in a million years expected this to happen. I thought I would fall in love with one new dog, and now I get to fall in love with hundreds."

In 2022, Dominguez started the paperwork for a 501c3 to officially make Border Paws a nonprofit organization,

allowing her to accept more donations and create events for where most of their donations roll in. She organizes bake sales and sells merchandise at local bars and restaurants year-round. Border Paws' seasonal events include holiday pictures with Santa, a summer bash, and a barbecue cook-out where people can bring their dogs to play with the rescues or even hang out with some of the pups. There is a pool party for the dogs, which sounds like a splash-splash blast! In May, a local bar hosts a Sexy Bingo event, and all proceeds return to the dogs. An extensive

list of other businesses also donates and hold events in Border Paws honor.

As amazing as this experience has been for Dominguez, and as much as she's totally in love with the dogs and her work, it's been a harrowing journey.

"People don't really see all the work that goes on behind the scenes. It's not always all sunshine and rainbows, you know? Like, if I wake up sick, I still have to go to the facility and let the dogs out and play with them and feed them. I have a couple of other people who volunteer with me, and we have such pride. We let the dogs outside so many times during the day because dogs going kennel crazy is real. We let them out to play with each other and be with us. Everything we do is for them. This is the life I built for myself, and this is the life I love, but it's so hard. I've had so many people tell me I couldn't do this because I'm young. I have to prove myself all the time. I may be young, but I know what I'm talking about, and I know what I'm doing. I'm confident this is what I'll be doing my whole life. I might return to college when things settle into a routine and I have a steady team to help. I want to pursue a business degree so I can maximize everything a nonprofit can do, take in more dogs, and give more of them the happily ever afters they all deserve."

**IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO MEET SHAILA OR ANY OF THE DOGS, YOU CAN REACH HER AT:**

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