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Board Member/Staff Bio's

Mary Jo Ambrosiani: Board President, has lived in the Sandpoint, Idaho area for 23 years. She has a Bachelor of Science Degree in Home Economics and a Masters Degree in Vocational Education with an emphasis on At-Risk Youth. Mary Jo spent 12 years teaching at the high school level in the area of Home Economics along with 5 years experience as a church youth coordinator. She is currently Director of the Ambrosiani Pastore Foundation, a Christian based Foundation created in 1999 by her and her husband. The focus of the Foundation centers on the at-risk populations in the greater Sandpoint area. She has been a Board Member of TIPS since 2007 and currently serves as its President.

Ann Gehring: Board Vice President has lived in Sandpoint for over 30 years. She has a bachelor's degree Biological Science and has taught science on the high school level in Priest River and Sandpoint. Previous to teaching science, she coordinated a Career Exploration Program. Both positions included work with at-risk students. She has served on the Homeless Task beginning in October of 2008.

Owen Mullen: Board Treasurer, has worked with the homeless and needy for over 20 years. He is currently involved in sales and marketing as well as farming. He is inclined to benefit the environment and make the social changes that keep people from falling through the cracks of our society.

Brenda Hammond: Board Secretary, LMSW, has lived in Idaho for over twenty years and is the mother of four children. Currently, she is employed by Mountain States Early Head Start as a Mental Health Specialist in Sandpoint. She also works as a therapist with A New Hope Social Services and facilitates a group there for individuals with both substance abuse and mental health issues. Previously, for almost ten years, she was a Family Development Specialist and Circles Coach for Community Action Partnership. Her previous career was in education and she taught at an alternative school in the mountains of New Mexico for over fifteen years, and later was the co-director of a residential school for at-risk adolescent boys. In the community, she has worked closely with the Human Rights Task Force, and was the recipient of an Idaho "Extraordinary Witness" award for her work in human rights—with a focus on issues of social and economic justice.

Gretchen Steen: Board Member, Gretchen Steen has resided between Hawaii and Sandpoint since 1993. She earned her bachelor's degree in Psychology and Sociology and holds a CSAAS from the University of Hawaii. She is an Idaho and Internationally Certified Alcohol/Drug Counselor (CADC, ICADC) and an Idaho State Licensed DUI Evaluator. In Hawaii, she was involved in AIDS awareness education as it was just emerging in the 1980's and the methamphetamine crisis in the 1990's. In the



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Waimea community, she organized health fairs and alcohol/drug awareness seminars. She has worked as a counselor in outpatient facilities in Hawaii and Sandpoint and, since 2006, has been in private practice as a chemical dependency counselor in Sandpoint, providing individual counseling and outpatient treatment. She also conducts a biweekly 8-hour Alcohol/Drug Information School. Her interests include facilitating environmental and social change.

Angelique Combs: Board Member, Angelique Combs was a client of TIPS and spent over a year at our Trestle Creek shelter. She participated to the fullest extent in our program is now renting a home and has started her own business. Her goal is to own her a home in the future. She is successful in her business and has a desire to serve on the board in order to help others achieve their goals. She is a great asset to the board based on her experience as a client and her enthusiasm for the program.

Craig Koester: Executive Director, received a Business Degree from U.C.L.A., with a Minor in psychology, and attended its Graduate School of Management's Real Estate Masters Program. His real estate career has spanned over 30-years and included virtually all aspects of the real estate business. He was the Director of Development responsible for the southwestern United State for the largest Real Estate Investment Trust in the United States. He has served as Real Estate Manager for several regional firms in California, Arizona and Idaho involved in large scale real estate development and management. He has also founded several boutique brokerage and consulting firms. He has assembled and managed residential portfolios including 36 low-income rental units in Sandpoint. Over the past 30 years Craig has volunteered for numerous organizations. He was part of a faith-based effort that completed construction of two orphanages in the northern state of Sonora, Mexico. He was a volunteer mentor for Social Advocates for Youth, a youth mentoring program in Southern California and the Boise Gospel Mission where he was evening admissions Director. He spent 10 years working with two Native American tribes in Arizona focused on low income housing projects, health care delivery and long term employment solutions. He has served on the Board of Directors of Transitions in Progress since early 2009 and was elected President of the Board in July 2009, a position he held through April of 2010.

Tamie Martinsen, Blue Haven Program Manager, attended NIC and the University of Montana studying economics and Social Work. She has worked with TIPS since 2005 starting as an intake staff at the domestic Violence Shelter. After multiple trainings in DV in 2007 she became a Case Manager at Harmony House and Blue Haven working with survivors of Domestic Violence. In October of 2008 she became a Supportive Housing Manager continuing with trainings in Domestic Violence, Homelessness, Money Management, and Fair Housing Advocacy. Tamie



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also serves on the Guiding Coalition for “Circles” an initiative to end poverty and participates in Region 1 Coalition for the Homeless. She has recently been active in establishing LARC, Legal Assistance Resource Connection a free legal guidance and assistance program for Bonner and Boundary Counties.

Lissa DeFreitas, B.S.W, Trestle Creek Program Manager, has over two decades of experience in diverse client milieu with emphasis on high-risk children/youth and families in crisis. She has additional expertise in crisis management, social/living skill-development, mental health services; specialization in alcohol/drug prevention services, intake/assessment and case-planning. She served on the Domestic Violence Consortium, Spokane, Washington, 1991-94, Spokane Human Right Commission. In 1986, Lissa was awarded a BS in Social Work at Weber State College, Ogden, Utah with a Minor in Psychology.

Cherie Peak: Domestic Violence Program Manager, has a bachelor’s degree in social work and has spent 19 years doing direct service and management for nonprofit social service agencies. Cherie has worked in the field of domestic violence for over 10-years and co-facilitates the DAEP.

John Rogers, Blue Haven Facilities Manager, received a BS in Electrical Engineering Technology. His professional corporate career began in computer hardware and software engineering. He has worked in the HVAC trade for 5 years, and has a lifetime of “handyman” experience starting on the 500-acre family dairy farm. Before joining T.I.P.S. he specialized in home building/carpentry working both as a self-employed craftsman and as part of a professional building team.

Steve Goff, Trestle Creek Facilities Manager, has worked for tips for two and a half years at Trestle Creek as on site facility management and maintenance. He also worked for five years before as a maintenance manager for two other companies. He also counseled teens for about 10 years as an assistant youth pastor in northern California. Steve has also been trained in suicide counseling and has 2 years of formal electronics training. I have lived in north Idaho for 12 years is married with 3 grown kids, and 16 grandchildren.

Chris Rinehart, Development Director, has been awarded a BA in English Literature, BS in Pre-Med and a Masters in Education. He is an accomplished pilot and a former air traffic controller who flies for the Forest Service in the summer battling wildfires. He is a Certified Homeopath and substitute teacher. He founded, and is the Executive and President of a nonprofit corporation that provides scholarship flight training for young people. Chris has been involved in fundraising for a number of years and volunteers his time to help T.I.P.S. achieve its financial goals.



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