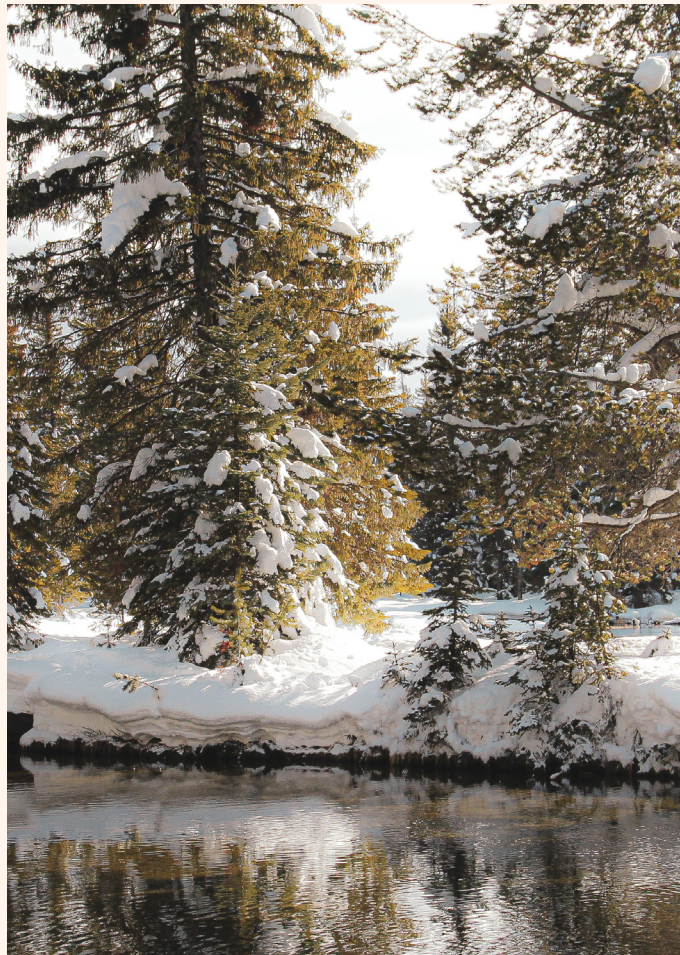

The Upper Valley Magazine

Stories from members of the Church of
Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

By Isabelle Justice





Page of contents

YA Weekly

04. Perfectionism
and the Savior

06. Taking
a step

08. Changing
my constant
companion

10. When it's
real

Narrative

12. BYU-I alumna bring
new thrift shop to
Rexburg

Data Journalism

16. Grand Teton National
Park

FROM THE EDITOR

Perfectionism and the Savior

Isabelle Justice

Struggling with perfectionism is overwhelming, but I found reassurance through Jesus Christ.

Preparing for general conference can be overwhelming when trying to think of the perfect question to bring.

As someone who struggles with perfectionistic tendencies, I find myself going in circles when it comes to gospel living. For conference, I used to try to find the “right” question I should bring before Heavenly Father, and then I ended up feeling like what I had come up with wasn’t completely right. This last April, I wanted to make sure that I felt peace at conference — not anxiety. I decided to better prepare by trusting that Heavenly Father understands me and the intent of my questions. After pondering, I settled on this: How can I find peace when I struggle with perfectionism? I prayed to heaven that my carefully curated concern would be

answered, and Elder Vern P. Stanfill of the Seventy gave me a solution.

Nothing Is Ever Lost

During the April 2023 Sunday Afternoon Session of conference, Elder Stanfill described his upbringing on a farm in Montana. As a boy, he watched his dad cut grain with a harvesting machine. After passing through a row, his father would check its path to make sure the machine collected as much usable grain as possible.

Elder Stanfill saw that some grain was still left behind. With a critical look, he showed his father the mistakes.

But his father responded, “It is good enough and the best that this machine can do.”

Still, young Elder Stanfill was consumed by



the imperfections of their harvest. After some time, traveling swans, ducks, and geese passed through the Stanfills’ farm. The migrating birds feasted on the grain that was left behind.

“God perfected it, and not a kernel was lost.” Elder Stanfill concluded. Even though their efforts were not perfect, Elder Stanfill and his father could help others. We need to realize that what we do is good enough in the Lord’s eyes. When we try our hardest — even if it doesn’t seem like a lot — we can trust that God

will perfect us. Our efforts will not be lost. And like the Stanfills’ harvest, our imperfections can often help others.

Perfected in Christ

Being a Latter-day Saint can be hard when we feel that we don’t measure up to God’s expectations. But Elder Stanfill answered this concern of mine when he encouraged members to put aside their own unrealistic expectations for gospel living.

“Perfection requires an impossible, self-inflicted standard that compares us to others,” Elder Stanfill explained. “This causes guilt, anxiety, and can make us want to withdraw and isolate ourselves. Becoming perfected in Christ is another matter. It is the process — lovingly guided by the Holy Ghost — of becoming more like the Savior.”

Since that April, I realized that perfectionism causes guilt and fosters contention. On the other hand, becoming perfected in Christ builds charity and gives us peace. I now understand that Christ will relieve us of the burden of guilt in the face of perfectionism if we trust Him.

So, trust Him. He will make the imperfect perfect.

Taking a step back to serve

Rosemary Jones

I noticed her tears first.

Despite the busy students walking down the long skywalk between the David O. McKay Library and the Hyrum Manwaring Center at BYU-Idaho, my eyes locked on a girl with long brown hair, dressed up in black slacks and a flowery shirt. She occupied one of the many benches set up along the walkway in front of the massive glass windows.

She sat by herself, stooped forward with her head down, holding back tears. One rolled down her red, tear-stained cheek. She quickly wiped it away, too enveloped in her sadness to do anything but stare at the ground.

I took two steps past her.

Thoughts crowded into my mind: “I’m a stranger. I need to do my homework. I can’t help her. I should

keep walking forward.”

I then remembered the prayer I said that morning. I woke up and went to school, forgetting to say my morning prayer beside my bed. I walked to class at a brisk pace, my shoes smacking into the concrete as I sped past students left and right.

Then, I slowed down and noticed the trees. They were vibrant and green in the warm, spring weather. I relaxed, taking in the chirping birds and the shining sun. Having embraced the beauty around me, I felt the need to express my gratitude to God.

During my prayer, the Holy Ghost prompted me to ask for an opportunity to serve someone today. This prompting reminded me of an invitation I received from one of the BYU-Idaho devotional speakers. They had invited every student to become disciples of Jesus Christ by serving those around them. I desire to serve the others around me because the scriptures talk about how when we serve others we are serving the Lord.

Doctrine and Covenants 59: 5 states, “Wherefore, I give unto them a commandment saying thus: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all

they heart, with all the might, mind and strength; and in the name of Jesus Christ thou shalt serve him.” From all my experiences in following the Spirit, I have learned that the Spirit helps me to accomplish this commandment even when I feel inferior.

After my prayer, I arrived at my classroom and focused on my studies. I did not worry about finding the person I needed to help. I was even unsure whether I would help somebody that day.

So, as I took my third step past the girl, I chose to help her. I pivoted my leg and spun around to walk over to her.

“Hi, my name is Rose. What happened?” I asked.

The girl straightened up and wiped away her tears. She surprised me when she started talking about what was making her so upset.

“I didn’t get the job I applied for,” she said.

Her voice was shaking.

While she explained her fears and trials I nodded and listened. I did my best to help her know she was a wonderful individual. I knew how she felt because I went through a similar experience during my first semester in college. We bonded over the same difficulties that life threw at us. At that moment, I tried to focus just on her and love her just as Jesus loves her.

This experience of service, and many others, has strengthened my testimony of Jesus Christ. I have come to recognize how my promptings have helped other people. I know that I am not perfect at serving, but when I follow the Spirit, I feel the blessings of happiness and peace enter my life.

I know that Jesus Christ is the perfect example of following the Spirit and helping people in need.





Changing my Constant Companion

Hayley Hopkins

I am known, I am loved, and now I have the constant companionship from someone who wants me to live and be happy.

A dark voice whispering suicidal thoughts to me had become my constant companion. I don't even know how it became so ingrained in my mind. I wasn't like this a year ago. At some point, I had begun slipping. My moods had dropped. My days often ended and began in tears.

Once you make a suicide plan, it starts to completely take over. At least that's what happened to me. Every time things would get hard, it was there. Every time I had negative self-talk, which was often, it was there. Every time I was overwhelmed, it was there. I hadn't even tried to make the plan.

That happened little by little.

I hit a rough patch and figured out how I would do it. I hit another rough patch and figured out where I would get the material to do it. I felt alone and figured out where I would do it. I felt really low and decided when I would do it. The plan developed so strongly that I knew every detail. Down to how long it would take and approximately when I would be noticed missing.

It was on constant replay in my mind. Much like when you rehearse saying something before actually getting the courage to say it. It just repeats, repeats, repeats.

I would find my mind slipping back to it every few days if not every day. It was bad.

Conference weekend hit. I felt a draw to it. I was busy that weekend, but it didn't matter. I wanted to pay attention this time. I was going to take notes, and I was going to listen.

I am glad I did.

Gary E. Stevenson gave a talk about the Holy Ghost and at the end of it, he issued a challenge. He said,

"I close with an invitation, especially for all youth!... Tomorrow, this week, this year, always, pause as you look at yourself in the mirror. Think to yourself, or say aloud if you like, "Wow, look at me! I am awesome! I am a child of God! He knows me! He loves me! I am gifted—gifted with the Holy Ghost as my constant companion!"

I took this challenge. I have done this nearly every day. I have forgotten once or twice, but always start again the day after.

My constant companion has changed because of this challenge.

I have been freed from the constant darkness and suicidal thoughts of my plan. I am now fed the constant reassurance and hope of God's plan. I can't tell you how light I now feel, even in my darker times.

Whenever I am overwhelmed, I hear the spirit reminding me of the words I repeat to myself every day. When things are hard,

I am reminded that God loves me. When I have negative self-talk, which is occasional, I am reminded that I am amazing.

When I am overwhelmed, I am reminded of my gift and constant companion. No longer do I hear constant whispers of self-harm. No longer does my plan haunt both my good and bad moods. No longer am I scheming to murder one of God's children.

I am known, I am loved, and I now have the constant companionship of someone who wants me to live and be happy. This challenge has changed my companion.

This challenge has saved my life.



When it's real



Hayley Small

The day my uncle told our family that he had left the church, that's when it became real.

I had plenty of friends or acquaintances leave the church before, but it always seemed so far away. It always seemed like it wouldn't breach the bounds of my bloodline.

My uncle is the second oldest of his 6 siblings. He was born directly before my dad and had been someone my dad looked up to. He was the first one to serve a mission and to get married. He's always been so smart and confident in himself. It was inspiring to watch growing up.

So, when the news surfaced that he had been doubting for a while and allowed anti-Mormon content to be the final

blow to his wavering faith, it was shocking. My dad was crushed. My uncle's wife was even more devastated. It was heartbreaking and scary. It felt like we were no longer immune to the adversary's temptations.

The thing with my uncle is that he didn't go quietly. He eventually started discussing anti-literature with my brother and cousins. He tried passing out books and information to lead people in our extended family astray. It was hard to watch. My dad was angry and didn't let those emotions go unvoiced. He told his big brother that we all still loved him and would, no matter what, but that it wasn't his place to try to persuade very impressionable kids to follow him. They needed to learn for themselves where their testimonies stood.

In the years that have followed, his wife and all of his 8 kids have left the church. It's just as heart-breaking every time more of my loved ones turn their back on God and Jesus Christ — the people who love them and can help them the most in this existence.

It isn't very uncommon to have friends and loved ones who have left the church in today's world.

I have quite a few people in my life who have decided that they are better off without living according to the gospel of Jesus Christ. They are still kind and loving children of



God, they've just chosen not to live according to the same standards that I have chosen.

At first, I thought that because they're good people and have good intentions, it wouldn't be too hard to continue hanging out with them. I thought that we could be friends. While I still find that to be true, I also found it to be incredibly difficult for my spiritual progression to hang around them when they are actively disobeying God's commandments.

I have struggled a lot with finding my way since returning home from my mission.

I am constantly seeking light and help and trying to do what's right, but often it's difficult. I have found that hanging around people who have decided

that they are against the church is not the environment that I want to put myself in.

I have since chosen to spend my time with other friends who aren't necessarily perfectly steady and faithful in the gospel, (because honestly, who is?), they have their doubts and their questions, but they still have a desire to live righteously. They are great about encouraging and supporting me in doing the same.

I am so grateful for the spirit that I am able to feel around them. I don't feel guilty or dumb for being myself and maintaining the standards that I have set for my life. I can be exactly who I am and not feel tempted to do, think, or act opposingly.

These are the kind of people that I feel close to and can feel the spirit with. It's so important to find people like this so that I'm not isolating myself and giving the adversary the upper hand at any point.

While my uncle and family members leaving the church has affected me greatly, I still love them with all my heart and I know that Christ loves them even more and that they will be given another chance to choose Him. I am grateful for the love and support that I have from the people in my life.

They are always there for me and I don't know where I would be without them.



FROM THE EDITOR

BYU-I alumna brings new thrift shop to Rexburg

Isabelle Justice



With stores like Thrifted Lennon's, Daisy Links and Superlame, thrift shopping is an easy way for students to connect in Rexburg. But for BYU-Idaho alumna Lily Galer, thrifting is more than just a hobby — it's a way to use her degree.

"(After graduation) I was looking for a job in marketing," Galer said. "But really, my dream jobs are all in major cities. It's harder to find jobs here in Rexburg that are specific to what I want to do — I want to be a creative director."

Originally from Washington D.C., Galer came to small-town Rexburg after serving a mission in San Diego, California. She graduated from BYU-Idaho as a communication major with an emphasis in social and digital media in December 2022.

After graduation, Galer met her husband while working at as the marketing manager for the local artisan drink shop, Crush.

"After we got married, I was really struggling to find a full-time job," Galer explained. "I'm really into buying clothes and finding thrifted stuff. Usually when I go thrifting, I think of a friend when I like a piece of clothing. I pick my favorite pieces, but I'm sad to leave the rest. I was trying to



figure out how to make money, so, I started my thrift Instagram page."

Two Names, One Mission

Galer's Instagram thrift store is called 'Lily's Thrift Finds,' with one exception.

"There are two different names," Galer said. "I was trying to find a name on Instagram that I didn't have to repeat a letter or put an underscore or dot in between, because that's what businesses try to do — they stay original. I was trying to find that name, and that's how I got the username 'Lilys Vintage Thrifts.'"

Galer uses the spare room in her apartment as her storefront for 'Lily's Thrift Finds.' She has seemingly everything, from graphic tees to jean jackets to leather boots.

"It's really cool to see how women can bond through something as simple as shopping," Galer said. "I'm really into buying clothes, dressing up and just finding thrifted stuff. I really don't ever shop at retail stores or online unless it's



something really specific that I can't find. I like to shop at local stores."

Womptober Music Festival

On Oct. 13, a chilly Friday night, Rexburg experienced its first Womptober Music Festival. The event featured 10 bands from the Eastern Idaho area and a variety of vendors attended the event.

Lily Galer was one of them.

"As I was unloading everything, a lot of the girls that were at the festival were curious," Galer explained. "I hadn't even finished unloading and girls were like, 'Hey, how much is this?' It was actually really crazy how people interested ... It was retail therapy for them, but not like breaking the bank."

Galer has not begun a physical marketing campaign; everything she does is completely on her Instagram. Having an in-person event was a new experience for the store, one that she claimed she was not prepared for until the event began.



“I was invited by a friend to sell at Womptober,” Galer said. “I didn’t realize that it’s so much work to bring all the clothes and everything that I own to sell.”

Because Galer’s brand focuses on staying affordable, her store has easily gained new followers on Instagram. This is what Galer feels sets her apart from other thrift stores in the area.

“I feel like what’s been lacking in Rexburg is a place where girls can go and shop,” Galer said. “There are places that increase their prices so they aren’t affordable for college students.”

In ‘Lily’s Thrift Finds,’ she focuses on having a wide range of clothing sizes. And that, Galer says, is what she loves about thrifting the most.

“In thrifting, you can’t really shop based on sizes,” she said. “You buy it and whatever size it is, it’s that size, you know? So, it’s cool to see that if I saw something that’s an extra small and someone can buy it ... It’s hard to find specific sizes, but with this, people can find unique sizes and you can connect with them.”



How change is a ‘bitter pill to swallow’ for Grand Teton National Park

Isabelle Justice

In April of 2020, zero people visited the most photographed mountains in the world — the Tetons — due to COVID-19. In the last 10 years, visitations to the Teton mountain range have been at a record high. As our world becomes digital, people crave the promise of peace a drive past the mountains can give. But, this comes at a cost.

The pandemic, as a whole, impacted the health of Earth positively and negatively. In 2020, air and water quality improved, greenhouse gasses dropped and noise pollution decreased, specifically in tourist destinations, according to a study from the National Library of Medicine. However, medical, plastic and hazardous waste increased to cope with the demands of hospitals.

So, what about the Tetons? Was this little corner of Wyoming impacted by the pandemic too?

Yes, immensely.

In a study done in 2021, only 5% of those who visit the Tetons were from the Jackson, Wyoming area and 91% of vehicles stop at least once in the park. That means from May through September, traffic is inherent.

Melisa Bigelow, a Jackson resident, watched how this global change and influx of vehicles affected her community.

“Since I’ve lived here, we totally have more visitors coming to Jackson,” Bigelow said. “When COVID hit, that was the year that National Parks just went bonkers because no one flew anywhere and everyone was driving to outdoor places. It was just an insane amount of visitors here, so there is an interesting vibe from locals that live here that are like, ‘I won’t even go in the park anymore because there’s too many people.’”

Since 2015, over three million visitors come to enjoy the beauty of Grand Teton National Park each year, and nearly four million people came in 2021. The most popular month to visit the towering mountains is July and August, as many excursions are closed in the winter months.

The traffic has hurt some of the most beautiful places in the park.

“There are all these special hikes that used to be ‘locals only’ that Instagram kind of ruined,” Bigelow said. “There’s one in particular called Delta Lake that only locals knew. There’s not even a really direct trail to it and it’s not on that many maps. I heard that if you were to ask a park ranger how to get to Delta Lake, they would guide you to another one. And then, everyone posted so many pictures about Delta Lake that it went viral, and



Grand Teton National Park preserves the landscape of one of the world's most impressive and highly visible fault block mountain ranges that abruptly rises up to 7,000 feet above the valley ... The range is juxtaposed with landscapes shaped by glacial processes and braided river geomorphology. The Teton Range is one of the continent's youngest mountain ranges, yet exposes some of the oldest rocks on earth."

- Grand Teton National Park



now it's just overrun."

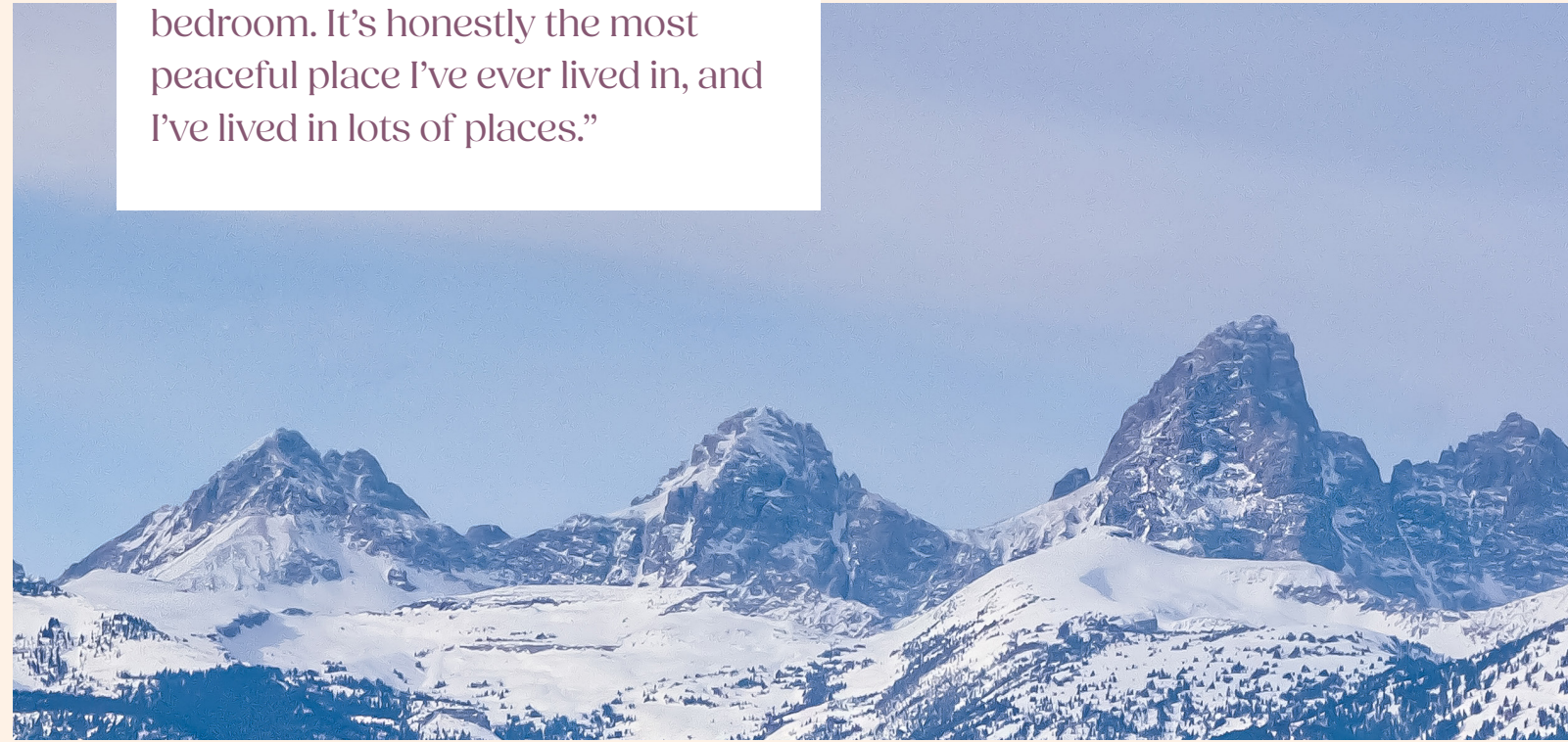
On the other side of the Teton mountain range lives Selena Miskin, a resident of Alta, Wyoming. Alta is a small town of 367 residents that is on the state line between Idaho and Wyoming. It is surrounded by other towns like Driggs and Victor, Idaho, and all three places experience similar trends.

"During the pandemic, people wanted to get away from the density of big cities," Miskin said. "I think during COVID they just didn't want to be around people. Teton Valley is clean, it's fresh and it's small, so it's the place to get away. It's also a big stop for those who want to visit the (Grand Teton National) park."

Jackson, Wyoming, on the other hand, has a population of 10,728 people and suffers similar problems to Alta and Driggs. But on either side of those jagged mountains, there is one thing that residents can agree on — they love their home.

"I really love the serenity that I feel around the mountains," Miskin said. "I love living right in its shadow — the Tetons are right outside of my bedroom. It's honestly the most peaceful place I've ever lived in."

"I really love the serenity that I feel around the mountains," said Selena Miskin, an Alta, Wyoming resident. "I love living right in its shadow — the Tetons are right outside of my bedroom. It's honestly the most peaceful place I've ever lived in, and I've lived in lots of places."



"Jackson almost filled up with people, and Driggs is their overflow," said Melisa Bigelow, a Jackson, Wyoming resident. "If you can't get to Jackson, they're going to Driggs."

On the other side of the Teton mountain range, Bigelow feels the same.

"I love them so much, I feel like they're mine," Bigelow said. "I think for everybody that lives here, you think that mountain range is yours. Every time we leave and when we come back to town, my family and I are just like, 'Oh, we're home. This is it. We love it.'"

Both Bigelow and Miskin buy a pass to Grand Teton National Park every year, and they visit in June and September to avoid the crowds.

"Before COVID, we had a ton of international visitors that would come from Salt Lake City in big buses," Miskin said. "After the pandemic, countries took a long time to open, so since then there's been a lot fewer international visitors. Now, people come from all over the country. They don't fly in planes to get here anymore, they drive. Fewer big buses, but we have lots more cars."

The growing number of cars is one of the biggest issues the park faces. A trend noticed by Grand Teton National Park is that people



In a study done in 2021, only 5% of those who visit the Tetons were from the Jackson area and 91% of vehicles stop at least once in the park.

are “enjoying the park in new ways,” by using more hiking trails, according to the park’s Visitor Use and Experience page. For example, trails in September 2023 were used 4% more than in September 2022.

And the number of people coming to the park is expected to increase. Last year was a relatively “low” year for visitors, with just under three million people. But in September of this year, the park saw a 21% increase in visitors, clocking in at just over three million people.

“Parking is insane, it is overflowing,” Bigelow said. “Being a local, I kind of am aware of when to go and when not to go. You either have to get there earlier, or you get there later in the evening by the time all the tourists have left the park.”

And many locals are even more “anti-growth” in Teton Valley, according to Miskin.

“They don’t want the ski resorts to expand or have them put in new runs or put in condos,” Miskin said. “They don’t want farmers to sell their land. I mean, they just want a cap on housing. They don’t want the valley to change, they don’t want it to grow. Driggs doesn’t want to turn into another Jackson or another Park City (Utah). People move here to get away from cities like that.”

In cities like Jackson or Park City, more people are visiting or moving to the area, and more people means even more change, according to Bigelow.

“Jackson is almost filled up with people, and Driggs is their overflow,” Bigelow said. “If you can’t get to Jackson, they’re going to Driggs is kind of what is happening. It’s hard because I’m kind of one of the people that moved in, right? We were just this family that moved and we work hard in the community — we’re a big part of it. I think the problem is that people are buying second homes, raising the prices, but they don’t live or contribute here.”

Change can be hard to watch, especially for those who work hard to preserve the majesty of the Tetons. For some who stay in the area year-round, they choose to look at the positive that change can bring.

“I think there’s those that are so sad to see their Tetons changing, it’s a bitter pill to swallow,” Bigelow said. “Then there’s those that love the change so much and they just want to make it work.”

BYU-Idaho

Created December 2023