



# FARMHOUSE



## IDAHO CHAPTER

SPRING 2022

### YEAR IN REVIEW FROM THE IDAHO FARMHOUSE ASSOCIATION

Greetings,

Before I get into the year in review, please allow me to introduce myself. I pledged FarmHouse as a senior in 2001. To this day, I tell fellow alumni and prospective students alike one of the few regrets of my college experience is not joining FarmHouse earlier. While my time in the house was short, the lessons and relationships from that experience have been lasting. Since graduation I've lived in Montana, the greater Seattle area, Washington DC, Salt Lake City, Washington state, and finally home to Idaho when my family and I were able to relocate to Coeur d'Alene in May 2020. I've served on UI Alumni Association Board since May 2015, currently as the Vice President. My wife, Sarah and I have two sons and a daughter, all future Vandals (fingers crossed) our oldest is adamant that he will be in the FarmHouse pledge class of 2027. My time as an Army officer led me into the critical infrastructure security profession with stops at the Department of Homeland Security, as a regulatory auditor, head of security at a mid-sized electric utility, and currently as a managing partner at Archer, a security and compliance consulting firm.

As you may recall, all students on campus were sent home in spring of 2020. The board, in consensus with FarmHouse International, elected to pause the chapter for two years with a return to Idaho in September 2022. This period allows for some long overdue facility work while planning a strong restart of the chapter. The remainder of 2020 and into early 2021 the board focused on assessing the physical state of the facility and prioritizing work. This prioritization work is now underway with a modern boiler system installed and designs underway for interior and exterior updates.

With COVID providing Idaho a brief respite in late summer and early fall we were able to hold a hybrid in-person and Zoom annual meeting, getting a handful of members back into the house for the first time in at least 16 months. Prior to the annual meeting, Taso Kinnas informed the rest of the board that he would not seek another term due to a new job and cross-country move. Cameron Ryffel was elected to that seat. The board meeting saw officer changes with Nick Weber elected President, Mike Conklin re-elected Vice President, and Wayne Wohler elected Secretary. Travis Palmer, Simon Barnes, and Cameron Ryffel fill the two at-large director positions on the board. The board was unable to elect a Treasurer at the annual meeting. At present, treasurer tasks are being completed ad hoc by board members but if you are interested in jumping in to assist as Treasurer please contact me.

Since the annual meeting we've focused heavily on getting into the next phase of house updates and have organized committees to address more efficiently both project and "steady state" tasks. The goal of these committees is to ensure we're utilizing our board members' time and talents judiciously while also allowing other alumni opportunities to engage where and how they are comfortable.

### CURRENT COMMITTEES:

*House Update - Nick Weber and Mike Conklin*

This committee is currently focused on managing the projects around interior and exterior updates to the facility but will transition to facility maintenance and updates once the chapter restarts next year.

*Strategic Planning - Wayne Wohler and Cameron Ryffel*

One of the most exciting ideas to come out of the annual meeting was reinvigorating the goal to build a new house. While that goal isn't within our current fiscal means, that vision reminds us that to reach lofty goals takes planning and preparation. This committee is charged with charting our path to those goals through developing and maintaining our strategic plan.

*Alumni Engagement and Communications - Cameron Ryffel*

Our strongest and most valuable resource are the very men FarmHouse has built over the years. This committee focuses on ensuring opportunities to continue to grow individually and collectively. This committee serves as the central hub for coordinating events, volunteer opportunities, and communications.

### FUTURE COMMITTEES:

*Recruiting*

We are following FarmHouse International's lead and experience in rebuilding the chapter but once that process is complete, we know the chapter will need our support identifying and recruiting the future men of FarmHouse. Who better to provide this support and demonstrate the value of FarmHouse than those of us who have benefitted from that brotherhood and our values? This committee will form over the course of the next year, working closely with our Alumni Engagement and Communications committee to support recruiting efforts.

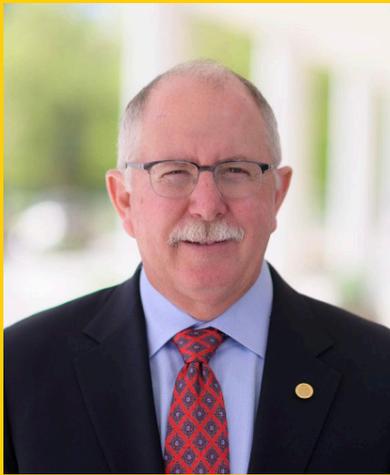
*Chapter Support*

This committee is the most vital to the long-term success of FarmHouse at the University of Idaho. The Chapter Support committee will ensure a regular presence in and around the house. This presence will ensure we provide mentorship, coaching, and accountability to the men of the chapter. The Chapter Support committee will be charged with identifying alumni and friends who can regularly visit the chapter and coordinating those visits to ensure a consistent presence without overextending any of our volunteers. We plan to begin forming this committee in early 2022.

If any of these committees interest you, please get in touch with me or the board member(s) leading the committee(s). Keep in mind there is no minimum participation requirement for these.

Fraternally,  
Nick Weber '02

## ALUMNI NOTES



### MIKE DONALDSON

Initiated in 1973, Mike was elected to the University of Idaho Alumni Hall of Fame.

From the press release: "College of Science graduate Michael Donaldson retired in 2014 as president and CEO of Valent U.S.A. Corporation, Valent BioSciences Corporation and Pace International, and executive officer for Sumitomo Corporation. Donaldson's career

has focused on both biorational products (a range of low environmental impact substances or productions biologically derived) and conventional chemicals for agriculture, forestry and public health. His pioneering work in the area of biorational products spanned more than 35 years and included research and development, as well as business management positions with Sandoz Crop Protection, Abbott Laboratories and Sumitomo. In these roles, he led efforts to integrate biorational products as partners with conventional chemistries for pest management and the enhancement of crop quality and yield. During his last 14 years with Sumitomo, Donaldson's leadership significantly increased the global footprint of the Sumitomo biorational portfolio, culminating in the construction of the first world-class, dedicated manufacturing facility for biorational products located in Osage, Iowa.

Donaldson held various technical and business leadership positions in a major pharmaceutical company, as well as a global agricultural chemical company. He served on boards of the Biopesticide Industry Alliance Organization, Illinois Biotechnology Industry Association and MeisterPro Publications (Meister Media Worldwide).

Donaldson and his wife, Debbie, continue their involvement with the university in many ways. Currently they are working with the College of Business and Economics, the College of Science and others to help provide business training to enhance the skillset of students enrolled in technical degree programs.

For his leadership and contributions to the fields of agriculture and biotechnology, the University of Idaho Alumni Association proudly inducts Michael Donaldson into the Alumni Hall of Fame."



### ERIC BILLINGS

Honored by the University of Idaho with the Brave and Bold Award was created in 2019 to recognize alumni 35 years of age or younger with a distinguished record of professional accomplishments, service to our alma mater and/or service to their community.

Eric Billings, initiated in 2006, is an associate vice president for Digital Product Management at Ruffalo Noel Levitz

(RNL). He also has more than a decade of fundraising experience, most recently as the director of Annual Giving at University of Idaho. Eric is a long-time volunteer for the Alumni Association.



## RENEWAL WORK IN PREPERATION FOR RESTART

The funds that we raised in our last fundraising campaign continue to be used to maintain and improve the house. While we fell short of some lofty targets, we're committed to ensuring those funds are used in the spirit they were graciously given. Our major completed projects over the past two years ensure the facility remains durable from structural and system perspectives.

As we've reported in earlier communications, we've reroofed the house to address problems with leakage problems the membrane roof.

We've also replaced all the windows in the house, which improved the uneven heating situation in the house.

This last summer we replaced the boiler, a constant source of concern because of its age with a new boiler system which includes three boiler units that can be independently operated to lower fuel consumption in times of lower demand for heating.

While these completed improvements may not "move the needle" to encourage young men to join FarmHouse, they are critical to allowing for some of the more noticeable projects in

As many of you are aware, the house hasn't had much comprehensive work done in quite a while. As we worked through many of the challenges of the facility and rebuilding the chapter, we found more silver linings and hidden opportunity than even the most optimistic among us expected when we made the decision to close the chapter for two years. Chief among those opportunities is the house itself. The two-man room arrangement and ability for upperclassmen to make minor customizations has always provided a recruiting edge but the message we've heard through the pandemic is that edge has grown ever greater with the ability to avoid common sleeping areas. There were concerns around the physical plant components of the house simply due to the age of the house, but after consultation with the contractor hired to replace our failing boiler, we learned the legacy systems and structure were solid, another case where "they don't build them like they used to."

Those of you who've visited the house over the past decade or so would likely agree it's tough to see past a lot of the surface-level challenges of the facility. Some examples are decades-old carpet, patched doors, deteriorating bathrooms, and very well-used showers. Expecting potential FarmHouse men to also be dissuaded by these issues we engaged Kim Kliever and Kristin Montgomery, experienced interior designers, Idaho Alpha Gamma Delta (AGD) alumnae, and wives of Idaho FH men to design interior improvements to the public and shared areas of the house. We do not plan to renovate the individual rooms except to ensure that they comply with building codes and other safety issues. The decision to focus on public and shared spaces in the house was a combination of ensuring we stay within our fiscal means and preserving the ability of members to customize their rooms within established guidelines.

Will Howard, President at Stack Rock Group, an experienced landscape architect and Idaho FarmHouse alum has initiated the

redesign of landscaping around the house. The intent of the new design is to create an inviting, useful space leaning into the unique nature of the house. As an alum and former resident of FarmHouse, Will brings unmatched knowledge and passion to the project with an inherent understanding of our requirements to keep costs manageable while developing a durable, low-maintenance space.

One of the most surprising revelations came in our first meeting with Will when he explained that architecturally the house has come back into style, providing us some opportunity to take advantage of the “mid-century modern” building during interior and exterior updates.

We’re well on our way to opening a fresh, attractive facility when we restart the chapter in the fall of 2022. We absolutely welcome the time and talents of other FarmHouse alumni and friends who would like to assist as we drive this project to completion and make the transition to strategically managing the house once the chapter restarts.

If you’re interested in helping please contact Nick Weber [nickw@alumni.uidaho.edu](mailto:nickw@alumni.uidaho.edu) or Mike Conklin [conkmath@gmail.com](mailto:conkmath@gmail.com).



## AGAIN: THE RAMBLINGS OF A NOOBIE NOMAD, TASO KINNAS ‘00

Hi y’all! In February of 2020, I accepted a software developer position based out of New Jersey (I was living in Boise, Idaho at the time). Initially, I was given until the end of the year to move out there and I would work remotely from Boise until then. As we all know, the very next month the COVID-19 virus was spreading across the country. As a result of this development, our entire IT Team started working from home and my position became indefinitely remote. At this point, I had read about being a working nomad and had coworkers in previous jobs that were partially nomadic (working remotely two-three months at a time). I began to research it more in depth. I talked to my boss to get his thoughts and he enthusiastically encouraged the plan. I spent a few more months researching and reaching out to some bloggers I was following (<https://campaddict.com/>) to make sure I had all my ducks in a row.

Fast forward to March 2021, I had traded in my Crossover SUV for a three-quarter ton pickup truck and a fifth wheel. I spent about two months moving in and getting my coach set up. Besides learning the ins and outs of living and maintaining a fifth wheel, I installed some modifications, particularly a solar system. I wanted to be able to go at least two weeks without needing hook-ups.

On May 1, I hit the road. My first stop, incidentally, was an RV park (Fort Running Bear) outside of Maintain Home owned by one of our fraternity brothers, Blaine Sellman. I hadn’t been able to catch up with him, so it was great to finally visit with him and his folks. Also, this is where I had my first (yes, there have been a few, lol) oopsie. I made a rookie mistake and didn’t check the height of

my coach to the tree branches. When I got to my camping space I learned I tore one of my solar panels off the roof. Thankfully, it just stripped the screws and there was no damage to the panel or roof (some small tears I was able to patch up). After a couple weeks at Fort Running Bear, I moved on to the Fort Hall casino outside of Pocatello. I spent a couple weeks there visiting another fraternity brother, James Winter, as well as another college friend that lived in Idaho Falls.

My next destination was The North Rim of the Grand Canyon. I was excited and nervous because I had never visited the Grand Canyon and this would be my first boon docking (ie, dry camping, no hookups for water, power, etc.) stop. After a few hours of driving around the back roads I found a great spot, about 20 yards from the rim. It was gorgeous! Unfortunately, my cell strength wasn’t enough to effectively work (oh shucks!). So, I decided to take a few days of vacation time and explore the area. I was not disappointed with the scenery.

After the Grand Canyon, I continued east. I ended up driving along the historic highway 66 and overnights in Adrian, TX. This is where the midpoint between Los Angeles, CA and Chicago, IL is for that highway. Not much there other than a sign and line in the road indicating the half-way point, ha.

The next stop was Oklahoma. There, I spent a week outside of Tulsa at an Army Corps of Engineers Campground and met up with another fraternity brother, Matt Rodriguez, who is living in Tulsa. Getting to visit with another fraternity brother was wonderful. This stop was also impactful that it was the 100th anniversary of the Tulsa massacre. Aside from learning of a dark part of US history not generally taught in schools, I had the opportunity to participate in an interfaith service and hear from local and national tribal and government leaders on racial equity. After Tulsa, I spent a week in Oklahoma City. My uncle currently works and lives there, and he was able to show me around town a bit. Another impactful experience was visiting the memorial to the Oklahoma City bombing.

From Oklahoma, I headed south into Texas. This was fun and also a giant mess, I found a wayward RV park about an hour outside of Dallas. It was by a lake a friend recommended for me to check out. I went hiking around the lake and then made my way to Dallas to visit a former co-worker. We checked out a brewery and then enjoyed some Texas BBQ. During the week, though, the temps hit 100+ degrees. My AC unit couldn’t handle it and I started having power problems with my system. After a day and a half of trying to work in uncomfortable heat and humidity, I threw in the towel and decided to skip my next couple destinations (Austin and New Orleans).

After New Orleans, my plan was to stop and visit my Aunt and Uncle in Clearwater, Florida. They were gracious and offered to let me “camp” in their drive-way to figure out my power issues and re-assess some of my setup/storage of stuff in my coach. Aside from sightseeing, I managed to take care of those chores. Thankfully, I didn’t put that off. A week before my planned departure, a city ordinance officer showed up to inform me camping is illegal in the driveway of a house and I had to move my coach within 24 hours. Yikes!

Fortunately, I was making plans to visit a friend in Alexandria, VA. He and his family were heading to the Outer Banks, NC that weekend. That was on the way to Alexandria, so I packed up my stuff and headed there to meet up with them. I have to say, Clearwater giving me the boot was a blessing in disguise. The Outer Banks was a lot of fun and the beach views were beautiful! I was glad to make the stop. After that, I journeyed to my friend’s place in Alexandria. I did some more drive-way camping for a few days and then we headed to a lake the following weekend. We had a delightful time of boating and campfire cooking. I also unsuccessfully tried to do some wakeboarding. Tubing was a win!

After Yough Lake, I was on to my next stop. I spent a week in the heart of Amish country outside of Lancaster, PA. Another fascinating experience, as I only knew of Amish from reading about them or they were referenced in some TV show. able to tour a museum and even briefly chatted with a few while grocery shopping.

*(Continued on insert.)*



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## IDAHO FOUNDATION COUNCIL UPDATES

Current rundown of our locally held endowments as of June 30:

*Centennial Scholarship Fund: \$22,059.63*

*LeTourneau Scholarship Fund: \$54,033.59*

*Ernie Polz Memorial Library Fund: \$15,530.51*

*Ernie Polz Memorial Scholarship Fund: \$41,625.62*

*Ross Scholarship Fund: \$54,259.82*

*Ken and Michelle Riddle Scholarship Fund: \$19,142.84*

Each of the scholarships above carries a requirement that the awardee is a member in good standing that lives in the chapter house, which was not a possibility during this past school year. Thanks to some flexibility by the university, Ken and Michelle Riddle, and the Ernie Polz Memorial Fund, we are pleased to announce two scholarships (Ernie Polz Memorial Scholarship and the Ken and Michelle Riddle Scholarship) were awarded to two deserving current undergraduates: Alex Mangum and Benton James. Congratulations to these outstanding young men.

All other funds have been rolled over for the upcoming school year.

I hope this finds you all well.

Fraternally,

Mike Conklin ('92)

## SHARE YOUR NEWS

Have you recently married? Has your family recently had or adopted a child? Maybe you changed careers, received a promotion, received an award at work or were recognized in your community?

We want to know about it!

Submit your news or new contact information for our next issue of Pearls & Rubies and future Association Newsletters by going to this website:

[bit.ly/SubmitFHnews](https://bit.ly/SubmitFHnews)