



sydney's wild outdoors

Sydney Klippenes, 19, lives in the Great Falls of Montana in the U.S., where she backpacks, hunts and fishes on weekends with her family. When she's not revelling in the great outdoors, she's a competitive dance coach and a teacher's aide at a childcare centre.

What's it like living in Montana? It's a lot of fun! We are so close to the mountains, lakes, and rivers. I have lived in Montana my whole life and have grown up in the outdoors learning to love the various parts of vast wilderness. The Great Falls and most of the surrounding areas are heavily populated with ranchers and farmers, so a big part of being a Montanan is knowing how to get dirty and be a hard worker. My family are blessed to experience the wide-open spaces – whether we are volunteering on a ranch or floating down the Smith River.

Tell us about your childhood! My childhood was adventurous! I have two older sisters who have made life enjoyable, though at times, a little hostile or confrontational. Our arguments consisted of tears and then a finale of laughter. We never took ourselves too seriously. My whole family is closely knit – we love spending time with each other. Our favourite pastime is spending the summer at a friend's cabin on the Smith River. We go days without phone service, internet and running water. Hanging out there is wildly refreshing!

What was high school like? High school was thrilling! It was filled with football games, a strong sense of school spirit, homecoming and beautiful friendships.

I was at a small, private school before high school and making the switch was terrifying! In the end, I came to understand who I am and who I can rely on. I grew closer with my family and in my relationship with God. I battled depression and anxiety in my sophomore, junior and senior years. At my lowest (and highest) points, I found I could always rely on God, family, my best friend, and my English teacher, Mrs Rosalis.

You volunteer as a missionary worker. What's involved? Sometimes it's handing out food and water, loving on kiddos or doing prayer walks. Other times it's shovelling gravel, painting walls, or picking up trash. You really learn how to be servant-hearted – everywhere you go is an opportunity to help someone in need. My parents started a ministry in downtown Great Falls called 'Hopeworx', where every Friday night they feed, clothe, and pray for anyone who shows up. It's an incredible ministry which doesn't require a huge amount of physical energy, instead you learn to dig deep and express your love for all people.

We love your hair! Was dyeing it a spontaneous decision? It wasn't necessarily spontaneous... but it was a huge surprise for my photographer,

Caroline who took my photos haha! I was previously blonde for about a year. On the day of my senior pictures, I had a hairdresser colour my hair silver-blue. Since then, I've dyed it pink, purple, and various shades of blonde. I think my hair is what separates me from others – and I like that!

Besides your luscious silver-blue locks, what's something quirky about you? Jigging to music, painting, rock climbing, cliff jumping, hiking... I like a bit of everything! I'm also obsessed with contrast in the creative sense, and I try to express this in my writing, fashion and art.

What's your advice for young women? Find out what your strengths are and capitalise on them. When people focus on their weaknesses, they tend to get burnt out. For the longest time, I struggled with being the hippie of my family and not knowing my purpose in life.

I knew I liked art, dance, teaching and babysitting kids so I found a way to combine these. I now know if I stick to doing what makes my heart happy (and aligns with what God wants for me), I will be successful.