

La Grande's Mariel Gates publishes first novel

■ 'Briarwood Girls' focuses on the topics of addiction and recovery

By Lisa Britton
Go! Magazine

Mariel Gates hopes her first novel brings awareness to the world of alcoholism and addiction.

"The story I wrote sheds some light on why people struggle with addiction," she said. "Showing they are human and they might have taken some wrong turns.

"Briarwood Girls" was released April 29. It is available through at www.pegasuspublishers.com, Barnes & Noble, and Amazon.



Mariel Gates

Gates graduated from La Grande High School in 1999 as valedictorian of her class. She is an honor graduate of Stanford University in political science (2003) and graduated from the University of Oregon law school in 2007.

She also competed as a high-level triathlete and distance runner.

She struggled after law school.

"Life kind of handed me some curveballs — and I didn't do my best at hitting them back," she said. "I got to see the dark side. It changed the trajectory of my life."

"Briarwood Girls" is categorized as both young adult and adult.

The story focuses on the world of alcoholism and addiction. The main character, Aubrey, is an alcoholic who enters rehab for the first time. Soon readers discover stories of other women in the facility.

The book description ends with: "The stories within Briarwood Girls illuminate that no one chooses to become an addict, and ultimately only addicts can save themselves."

"I wanted to shed light on the stigma of addiction," Gates said.

"It's not a biography, but it hits close to home."

It was not an easy story to write. "It was incredibly hard to write," she said. "There were times I got physically sick."

The main character, she said, "came out in waves in the middle of the night."

She finished the book fairly fast, but then the editing process took about a year.

She said it was hard to share this personal work of writing, and her first reader was a long-time friend.

"The hardest part was to share it, to someone else read it," she said.

She hopes the book relates these thoughts about addiction:

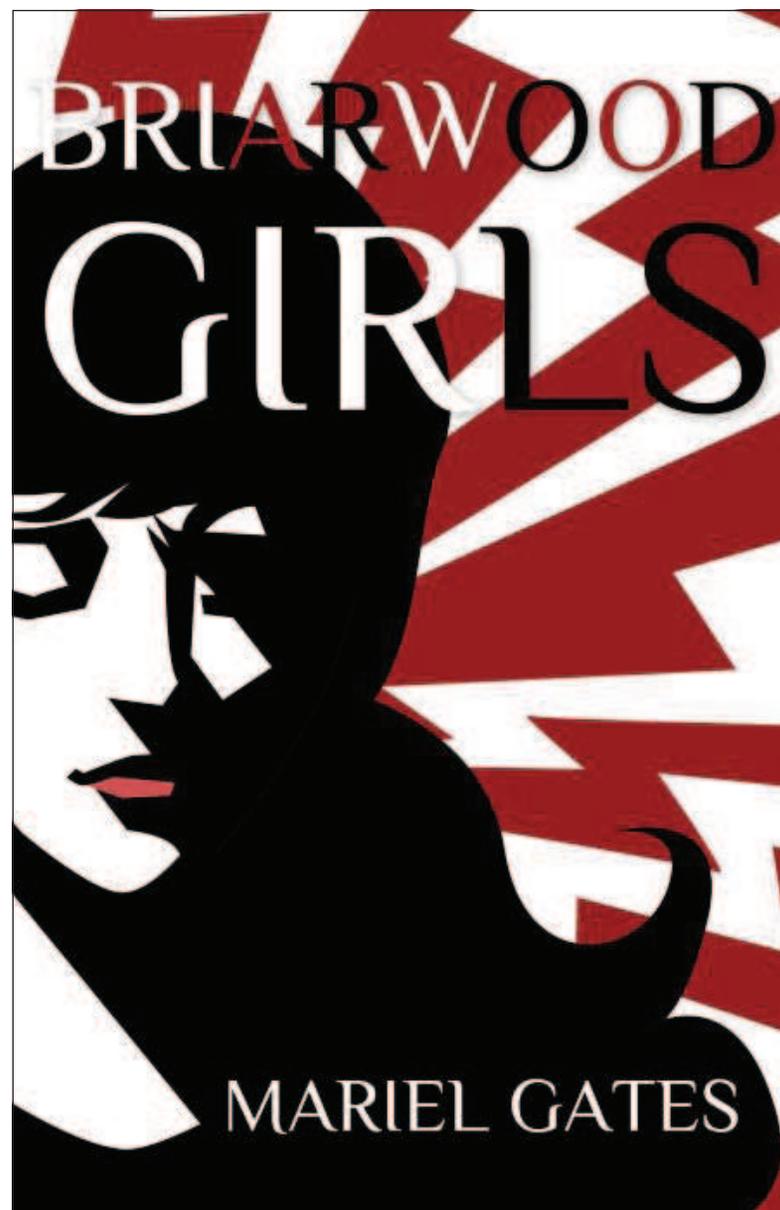
"How do we help our friends or family? How do we empathize?"

Again, she returns to her own struggles.

"Those events changed my perspective on how we can give other people more grace, and give myself more grace," she said.

Gates lives in Idaho with her husband and three children.

This is her first book, and she has more in the works.



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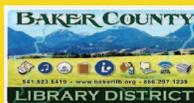
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