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During college, I stumbled into an internship giving tours at Blanchard Springs Caverns in Arkansas. With little prior experience in caves, how my life completely changed that summer came as a shock. The eye-opening experience that summer working in and exploring caves led me to dive headfirst into caving. My interest started with a personal excitement of caves, but quickly grew as I felt the warmth of what grew into my caving family.

I quickly decided to delve into the world of cave science and studied karst science at Western Kentucky University and became involved with my first Grotto. During graduate school, I was an officer in the Green River Grotto. Since then I have been honored to work as a cave resource specialist at Sequoia - Kings Canyon and Grand Canyon National Parks. Today, I study karst at the Kentucky Geological Survey as a research scientist. In addition, I volunteer as an officer for the Kentucky Speleological Survey and the Karst Division of the Geological Society of America.

Caving afforded me the opportunity to travel all over the country, exploring, mapping, and researching. No matter where I end up, I continually find that the fellowship amongst cavers drives the caving community. While caving communities differ across the country, what holds us together is our common desire to explore and protect the world of wonder beneath our feet.

After being a part of this community for 20 years, it has become clear to me that our future hinges on (1) recruiting new cavers from many demographics and (2) our ability to retain new and old members alike.

Cavers who stay engaged with the NSS, including myself, do so because of our connections within our caving family. Retaining members in the future is going to be driven by our ability to help new and old cavers find their community within our larger caver family. If you look at the NSS nationwide, the numbers show we are losing our members; however there are pockets within America where we see growth and enthusiasm for caves. Some of the things that those groups have attributed their success to include relevant members benefits, increased transparency in how the organization is run, and actively encouraging inclusivity. If elected Director, I plan to delve deeper into how these groups have grown and what lessons can be gained to reproduce that growth nationwide.

I believe through listening and engaging with all stakeholders, we will grow a larger consensus and build a strong future of continued exploration, study, and protection of caves. My experience as a researcher, caver, and cave manager give me an ideal background to help our family thrive.