

FOAL Newsletter

Inaugural Picnic in the Peaks a Success

Flag day marked FOAL's first ever "Picnic in the Peaks." Approximately 40 people were in attendance. The event was used as an opportunity to introduce supporters to the herd management area and learn about the horses, and the work that FOAL does.



Abel Guevara, BLM Wildlife Biologist. by Nettie Kelley.

Guevara, wildlife biologist, and wild horse specialist with the BLM was the final presenter. Abel talked about his efforts to help manage the McCullough Peaks herd size through PZP fertility darting, and about his other range related duties and projects, and finished his presentation with a small demonstration of his field darting expertise.

After presentations, attendees were able to follow Mel Sell, owner of Cody Wild Mustang Tours, LLC, for a free opportunity to see the wild horses at closer range and learn a bit more about the herd. Overall, people seemed to enjoy the event, the weather was cooperative, and the horses made an appearance in the distance. FOAL hopes to host future picnics in the years to come. *By Heather Green, FOAL Executive Director*

K-12 FOAL Art Contest Winners

In February Friends of a Legacy (FOAL) advertised a t-shirt design art competition open to Park County school-aged kids, with cash prize offerings for first and second place. FOAL was thrilled with the submissions, and ultimately decided to expand the prize pool to include a third place prize, too.

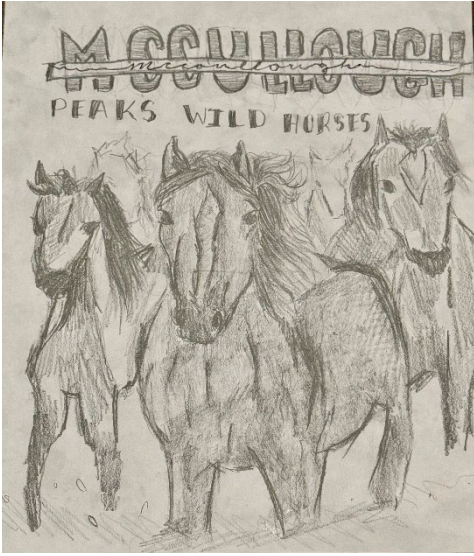
The \$150 first place prize went to Calise Velazco, a ninth grader at Powell High School. Calise loves art because it communicates how she views the world and what she cannot express in words, due to her autism. She hopes her art will inspire others to express themselves and not be afraid to be who they are. Calise entered the

Several guest speakers presented to the attendees. Phyllis Preator, a local author, shared her inspiration and motivation around her new book, *Wyoming's McCullough Peaks Mustangs*. Copies of Phyllis's book are for sale at Legends Book Store in Cody. Board President, Hap Ridgway, presented next with a bit of FOAL history, and special notes of appreciation for the efforts of the founding members and for the organization's accomplishments. Abel was the final presenter. Abel talked about

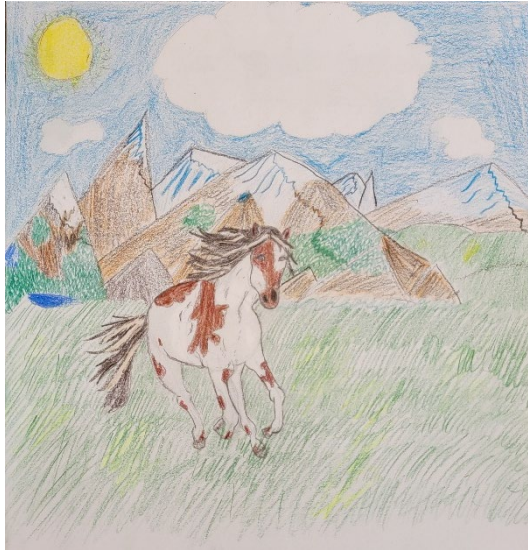


McCullough Peaks horses June 14th, by Vicki Olson

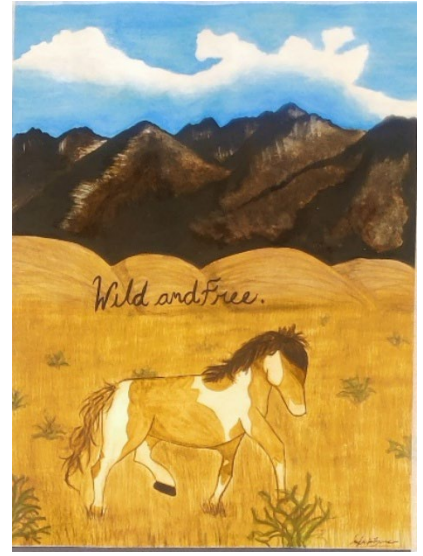
competition because she wanted to share her art with others. She thinks horses are elegant, and enjoys their fluid and graceful movements, and wanted to capture their movement in her submission.



First Place Winner



Second Place Winner



Third Place Winner

Second place, and \$100, went to Ruthie Challis, also known as "Jojo", a fifth grader at Westside Elementary in Cody. Art has always been a way that she expresses her passions, so she was thrilled to enter this contest! Wild horses match her free and adventurous spirit, and she admires them dearly. She easily drew on that spirit to honor and emulate their majestic beauty.

Third place, and \$50, went to Amali Wijesena, a 12th grader at Cody High School. Amali was excited to participate in the contest. She says that not only is art a way to bring a vision to life, but it is the purest form of expression, personal and full of emotion. Amali finds incredibly beautiful the way art brings out what is inside a person.

The winning art submissions were used in new FOAL merchandise including tshirts, greeting cards, and playing cards which are being sold to help support FOAL's work. New merchandise was debuted at the recent FOAL Picnic in the Peaks.



Winners Calise Velasco and Amali Wijesena pose with FOAL Executive Director, Heather Green

By Heather Green, FOAL Executive Director



Wild Flower Bouquet, by Nettie Kelley

Wildflower

Monitoring the McCullough Peaks Mustangs has been a lifelong passion of mine. Seeing the horses is always a treat. And, it doesn't matter how many times I've seen them; I still enjoy the moment. Even though my moments have now grown into years, they still spark that special feeling of enjoyment.

One day this spring, one of those special moments unwound as we drove around the corner and sighted the Bridger Butte herd. We stopped just to absorb the picture as it unfolded before us. Horses of multiple colors were grazing quietly on the new spring grasses. Here and there new wildflowers were beginning their spring blooms. The horses with their blend of colors seemed to fit perfectly in the spring landscape. What a special moment. Then... all of a

sudden, as if out of nowhere, from the middle of the herd bounced this little spark of motion. It quickly ran weaving in and out and around the adult horses. We could only catch quick glimpses of this little flurry of motion. The adult horses continued to graze quietly as if nothing was going on. Then...as

quickly as it had appeared, it disappeared. We looked at each other, “Where had it gone?” We’d hoped to catch a quick photo. It was of a soft bay color, easy to camouflage in the herd, not like one of those brightly spotted little characters. Then to our delight, it reappeared again in full motion...running and bucking amidst its elders. After another lap around the obstacle course of grazing adults, it noticed us and stopped. What a special moment as it quietly stepped behind mom and peered out at us. I never tire of a moment like this, the discovery of a new baby. Their spunk is beautiful. This foal’s upbeat spirit and race amongst the new spring blooms on the arid landscape, brought to my mind Tom Petty’s song “Wildflowers”. The lyrics began to jingle in my mind... “You belong among the wildflowers...”. Later this new foal was christened “Wildflower”. Wildflower is bay with a very distinct small white patch on her forehead that looks somewhat like a crescent moon. Because of this crescent moon she wears, she will always be recognizable, and we’ll all know it is “Wildflower.”

During my time, bays have always been abundant in the McCulloch Peaks. Their abundance can be credited to the history of our local communities. During the first part of the 1900’s, hundreds of bays were raised on our open ranges for calvary remounts that were shipped abroad to our American troops. During the same period, there was a need for many draft animals, of which a lot were also bay. Many draft animals were used in our area to help construct the very first and largest Reclamation Project ever built in the U.S., known as the Shoshone Valley Project. This project brought badly needed irrigation waters to the homesteaders of our arid lands. Consequently, when I see another bay baby like “Wildflower”, it makes me smile. It’s hard to erase history. My hope is that we will always have plenty of bays amongst the many other colors of our McCullough Peaks Mustangs.



Wildflower, May 2025, by Nettie Kelley

By Phyllis Preator, May 2025



Phyllis during the FOAL Picnic in the Peaks, by Vicki Olson

Phyllis Preator Chronicles the Spirit of the Wild in *Wyoming’s McCullough Peaks Mustangs*

For local author and artist Phyllis Preator, the bond between art and horses was born in childhood. “I’ve always liked to draw, and I’ve always loved horses,” she shares. “As a little girl, you draw what you love—and for me, that was always horses.” Her artistic journey evolved through formal study, but horses remained a constant muse, from youthful sketches to more technical explorations of equine form in sculpture and movement.

In her latest book, *Wyoming’s McCullough Peaks Mustangs*, Preator brings her artistic eye and teaching background together. “I wanted this book to be people-oriented,” she explains. “Something that could serve as a tutorial or a teaching aid. The ecosystem out there is incredibly diverse, and I wanted to make that more accessible to readers.” With a degree in education, she has long seen herself as a teacher—and now, through the pages of this book, as a storyteller too.

Collaboration played a crucial role in the book’s creation. Preator credits her friend and fellow wild horse enthusiast, Nettie, with helping to balance the project. “We look for totally different things when we’re out photographing the horses,” she says. “I might focus on a single detail or behavior, and she captures the whole

herd. I tell her not to change—because when I need to study something, I go back to her wide shots and find exactly what I need.”

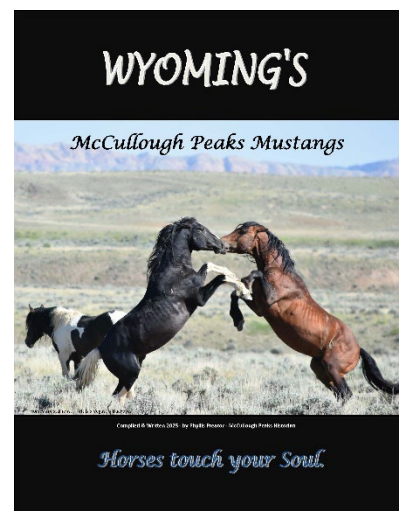
Designing the book was, she admits, a labor of love. Using Microsoft Publisher, she treated each of the 54 pages like a canvas, carefully cropping images, refining text, and shifting layouts until the visual rhythm felt just right. “Finding the right photo was probably the hardest part,” she laughs. “I’d dig through my files looking for a shot of a horse like Badger, then realize Nettie had a version that fit the composition better. In the end, the photos are about 50/50 hers and mine. She’s saved me hours—it’s so nice to have a Nettie!”

The feedback since the book’s release has been overwhelmingly positive, coming from readers across the country. “That’s been the most rewarding part,” Preator says. “I feel like this book is my contribution to the community—a way to share what we have up there, what makes it so special.”

When asked what she wishes most for the McCullough Peaks herd, her voice softens. “I’d wish for them to remain managed as they have been, and to stay a varied herd. I want to see those horses out there forever.”

As for what’s next, she turns back to art. After losing her longtime companion horse, Loreda—who she’d ridden for over two decades—she’s begun a painting called *Spirit Horse*. “I started with his eyes,” she says. “His eyes are just the right color. They’ll grab you.”

By Heather Green, FOAL Heather Green



Book Cover

Boost Your Donations to FOAL

FOAL is a small nonprofit. We have one part time employee, and a very passionate working board who carries out the mission of the organization, to protect and preserve the wild horses of the McCullough Peaks. Though we do apply for and use grants on occasion for specific projects, we rely heavily on private donors to help fund the work we do. Similar to years past, we will again be participating in Wyo Gives this year. We are also participating in the Hughes Charitable Foundation Incentive Pool. Every donation given to FOAL through the WyoGives.org platform on July 16th will be boosted by this generous \$1,000,000 incentive pool. These funds can make a huge difference in the impact of your donation. Last year, we received \$2,595 from the incentive pool, which was nearly a 44% boost of the donations we received. We are so grateful for the support that



we’ve received from each of you. Without your financial support, we wouldn’t be able to do the work that we do. If you are thinking about sending a donation to FOAL in the next month or so, please consider making your donation on July 16th, directly through the Wyo Gives online platform. To go to our Wyo Gives profile, please visit: <https://www.wyogives.org/organizations/friends-of-a-legacy>.

Volunteer Opportunity The 9th annual Mustang Rendezvous was a success last year. It was also a LOT of work! FOAL is hoping to try something new next year. We are looking for a couple of passionate volunteers that would like to be on the Mustang Rendezvous planning committee this year. Volunteers would help with securing silent and live auction donations and help with event set up and take down. If you are interested, please send an email of interest to Heather Green at foal2005@outlook.com.

