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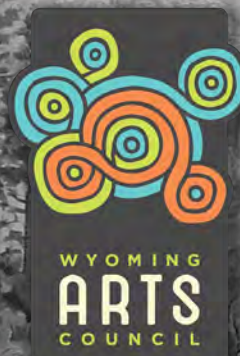
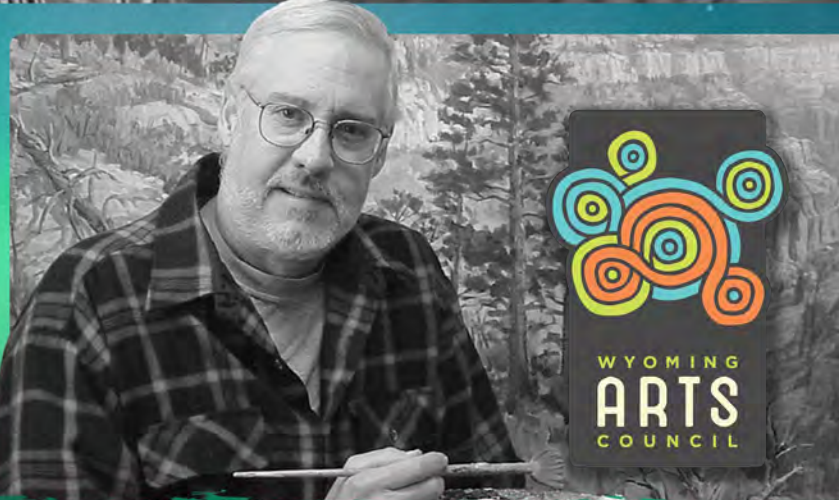
WYOMING ARTS COUNCIL NEWS • SUMMER 2025



COVER STORY

Celebrating the 2024 Governor's Arts Award Recipients

PAGES 4 - 13





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MAGAZINE

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ON THE COVER: Recipients of the
2024 Governor's Arts Awards



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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S COLUMN



Rachel Clifton

Welcome to the first of two Artscapes issues of 2025!

This issue is our opportunity to celebrate and share more about the recent Governor's Arts Award recipients. If you weren't able to join us in Cheyenne in February, I

hope you'll take a moment to learn more about each award recipient and read about the ongoing impacts they have in their communities.

There's also an inspiring article highlighting the Jackson Hole Still Works label art contest and how this innovative idea continues to support Wyoming artists. It's an incredible example of how private and public support for the arts can generate opportunities and strengthen the sector.

Alongside our staff, board, and numerous partners, we are having frequent and robust conversations about the arts and culture sector, specifically about how we can build sustainability into our work. As you've undoubtedly noticed, this issue of Artscapes is only available digitally. The decision to move Artscapes to an electronic format for the year, along with some other changes at the Arts Council, are not made lightly. We are navigating a lot of uncertainty at this moment, ranging from questions about the role of the arts in our communities, to the importance and impact of public funding for the arts. As stewards of public funds and as a granting agency, it is our responsibility to take these factors into consideration as we plan for our future and ensure that we are continuing to meet our mission and serve our constituents.

Some other changes that you will see this year includes the condensing of our biennial Arts Summit. By shortening the timeframe and reducing the number of sessions, we hope to lighten the financial burden and create an environment for more focused and in-depth conversation.

You've likely noticed that some of our other grant applications have not yet opened as we await information about federal funding. Additionally, we've made the difficult decision to put the Fellowships on hiatus for the year. This is certainly a departure for this longstanding program, but in light of fiscal uncertainties, we want to ensure that we are maximizing the reach and impact of public funds.

The Wyoming Arts Council was established in 1967 and has withstood changes and challenges since then. Moving through this latest iteration of uncertainty, I encourage you to be vocal and enthusiastic supporters of the arts. Plan a summer road trip to a Wyoming museum, buy tickets for the opera, engage with the tourists visiting the music festival, and talk to your friends and neighbors about what the arts bring to your community.

I hope many of you can join us at the Arts Summit in Casper this October, where we will continue this conversation with an eye toward the future. Between now and then, I invite you to reach out to me or to an Arts Council board or staff member. Together, we can work to ensure that the arts and culture community in Wyoming is strong and sustained as we move forward.

Best,

Rachel Clifton, Executive Director
Wyoming Arts Council

MIKE KOPRIVA: TELLING WYOMING'S STORIES IN ART

By Susan Mark

Step into Room 302 of the Wyoming State Capitol, where the Joint Appropriations Committee meets, and you will see the artistry of Mike Kopriva. An 8 x 22 foot acrylic mural dominates the back wall depicting everything from the majesty of Yellowstone and Devil's Tower to the University of Wyoming, to the people who have shaped the history of the Equality State.



"This says Wyoming and the land and the people," said Ann Redman, who nominated Kopriva for this year's awards. "It shows the industry as you look at it – the oil, the sheepherders, the cattle, the railroad. His work tells the story."

Another of his pieces travels the world on the USS Wyoming Trident submarine – a view of the vessel with a background of Wyoming scenes in the skies that hangs in the captain's dining room.

Kopriva is a Wyoming native, born and still living and working as an artist in Powell. He earned his BFA in 1974 and MFA in 1976 at the University of Wyoming. His art can be found throughout the state in banks and other prominent locations.

His interests are wide ranging with music, astronomy, airplanes, geology, and wildlife in the mix – interests that have informed his work.

"A lot of the hiking and things I did and climbing inspired a lot of my mountain scenes that I did," he said. "In fact, in college most of my friends were geologists – hardly any of my friends were artists. Mostly geologists and outdoors people. That really got me going, too."

He's known not only for his skill, but also for his generosity in sharing his talents with donations to nonprofit organizations and in the classes and workshops he taught to budding artists over the years.

"I think that to be able to make a living as an artist nowadays is a real privilege, and that privilege isn't taken lightly," he said. "I always wanted to kind of give back as gratitude to the people who supported me in the past."

He was drawn to art at a young age, always modeling things in clay or painting watercolors. When he was 11, his father bought him oil paints and showed him how to get started. "He took off for work, and by the time he got home to lunch, I had already done my first painting."



Mike Kopriva and Pinnacle Bank Market President Todd Ernst gathered for a portrait with one of three Kopriva sculptures installed at the bank in 2017. Photo from Powell Tribune.

Kopriva sold his first painting, a seascape, as a freshman in high school. Subsequent sales earned him enough to finance a trip to Europe between his junior and senior years to see the works of the old masters. He was introduced to acrylics and became hooked on the ability to build up textures and forgo the long drying times of oils. It was during his time at UW that he learned to carve stone and work in steel as well, studying under Robert Russin.

"In a lot of ways, carving stone is a lot like watercolor painting because it's a subtractive thing," he said. "You can't ever have the white back into the watercolor, or you can't add the stone back onto the sculpture. And acrylic is a lot of ways related with welding, where you can build things up."



Powell artist Mike Kopriva works in his home studio just south of town. Photo by Mark Davis for Powell Tribune.

Milward Simpson, who wrote a letter of support when Kopriva was nominated in 2023, noted that when he thought of artists deserving of a Governor's Arts Award, he looked through the lens of whether the artist has a statewide impact and the degree to which their work is informed by and represents the qualities of Wyoming.

"His enthusiasm and his interests are things that most Wyomingites could really identify with," Simpson, a past director of the Wyoming Department of State Parks and Cultural Resources, said in an interview. "He loves our wildlife, and he loves our landscapes and seeks to represent what it is that's beautiful and endlessly compelling about Wyoming through his art."

Simpson noted that Kopriva's work can be a special inspiration to others who want to make a life in the arts. "He received training from other great Wyoming artists like Robert Russin and Harry Jackson, so he comes from a tradition of great Wyoming artists, and a budding visual artist can maybe be inspired to be part of that tradition by encountering his art."

Simpson added, "I'm just really happy for him. It's a great testimonial to his work. It's a great kind of acknowledgement of who he is as an artist and who he is as someone who loves Wyoming."

In response to the honor, Kopriva said, "I just feel very humbled that I was selected for this art award. There's so many talented artists in the state, and it's very humbling."

JANE LAVINO: ART EDUCATION WITHIN AND BEYOND MUSEUM WALLS

By Susan Mark

Dedicated, passionate, innovative, and resourceful – Jane Lavino has been a force for art education for more than 30 years at the National Museum of Wildlife Art (NMWA) in Jackson.

“Among Jane’s many gifts is her ability to make art accessible,” Susan Simpson Gallagher wrote in a letter of support for Lavino’s nomination. “She is remarkable at capturing and sharing the universality of art in our lives and in the world. Her exhibits and education programs have brought thoughtfulness, fun, and energy to the museum, its staff, and visitors.”

In-house activities include everything from art making to audio tours to an interactive, 3D version of the painting “Chief” by the artist Robert Bateman for low vision visitors. From programs and activities within the museum’s walls to statewide outreach, to the national and international reach of the award-winning Bisoncast video series, Lavino and her team educate and inspire thousands each year.

Lavino is the Sugden Chief Curator of Education at the museum. She joined the NMWA in 1991, when it was still in a small, rented space on the town square with a handful of employees. She became the department head for education shortly after the move to the current location in 1994.

“This is probably not just true of arts educators, but any kind of educator,” Lavino said. “I feel like one of the things that will make the most difference is to



be passionate about your subject and enjoy sharing that with others. And I certainly am and do.”

Lavino’s passion shines forth when she speaks of some of the programs she’s headed up. One is Bisoncast, an educational video series found on the museum’s website and on YouTube that delves into aspects of the collection. Currently, 12 videos are available with two more in the editing and production stage.

“One of our main goals was to make this museum more accessible to people who are at a distance, people who are remote, who maybe would never have a chance to visit here in person,” she said. “It was this idea that had plenty of hurdles and plenty of obstacles to make it a reality, but we had all the stories we wanted to tell.”



Jane leading a school tour through the NMWA.



Jane reading to some children at the Fables Feathers & Fur event at NMWA.

Another of her proudest achievements was heading up the creation of the museum’s ¾-mile sculpture trail. The director at the time, Jim McNutt, asked her to be the project manager.

“I was the educator,” she said. “I wasn’t quite sure why he asked me to do that, but it ended up being something that was really fun to work on, really exciting. We hired a fabulous landscape architect, Walter Hood. Walter was the one who had this really clear vision. Being the closest one to him in my role, I was able to take his vision and his ideas and make sure they got translated to the best of my ability.”

“She did a wonderful job shepherding that project, which has added a whole new dimension to the museum,” said Adam Harris, who worked with Lavino for 20 years as NMWA’s Curator of Art. “She continues to oversee the sculpture trail, to make sure that new additions meet the original vision.”

Harris, who is currently the Director of the Carl Rungius Catalogue Raisonné and Chair of the Wyoming Arts Council Board, described Lavino as “unflagging and tireless in her dedication,” and also called out her resourcefulness, “She is able to work

wonders with the limited budgets we all have in the museum world. I remember her creating some pretty phenomenal things with the resources she had.”

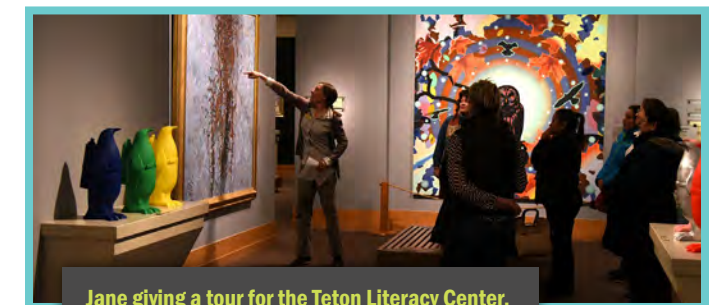
Over the years, Lavino has been involved in statewide projects targeted to youth, such as when the NMWA ran the Wyoming Junior Duck Stamp Program, or the “Traveling Trout” exhibit. This work, as well as that done at the museum, developed and promoted young artists, encouraging them to pursue art.

“I can think of a variety of young artists who came through these doors as either children or young adults who are now professional artists, so that’s really gratifying,” she said. “I hope we can continue to encourage working artists in Wyoming and beyond to do their work and to find an audience for their work and to feel their work is valued.

She added, “I also feel like an important job of ours here at this museum is to encourage the next generation of artists. It’s important to nurture them. It’s important for them to see that they could go into the arts and there are people who work in the arts, whether it’s artists or educators or people who support the arts. I feel like kids need to hear that. Everybody needs to hear that.”



Jane at the Plein Air Fest, Etc. in Jackson.



Jane giving a tour for the Teton Literacy Center.

T. ALLEN LAWSON: FINDING INSPIRATION IN THE LESS OBVIOUS

By Susan Mark



In his work, T. Allen Lawson draws on the sometimes unnoticed landscapes of Wyoming and Maine. He has been described as one of the most respected and innovative painters in the country, combining precision and emotional depth. His career has spanned more than 40 years.

"Tim has contributed to the excellence of the arts throughout Wyoming, as well as elevated the national and international profile of our state," said Caitlin Addlesperger, President and Executive Director of the Ucross Foundation. "His quiet, rich scenes tell thoughtful, honest stories of the real people and the land of Wyoming."

Lawson has been exhibited in acclaimed collections, including the Denver Art Museum and Smithsonian Institute, not to mention The Brinton Museum in Big Horn, Wyoming, not far from his hometown of Sheridan. In 2008, he was selected by President George W. Bush to paint the image for the White House Christmas card.

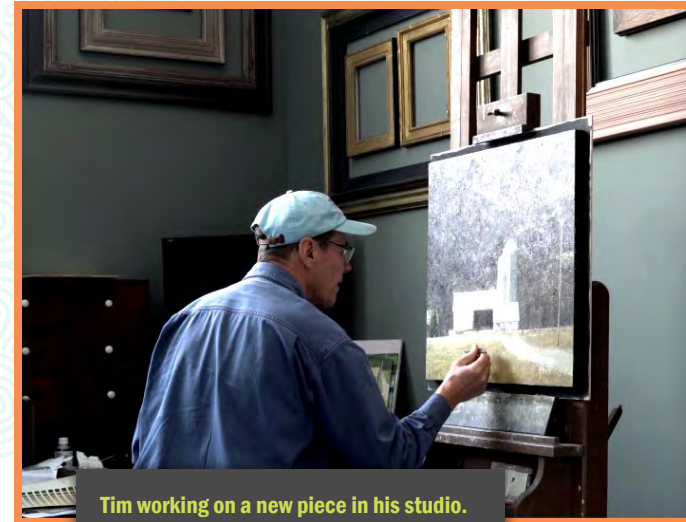
"I think the thing I'm probably most proud of is that I've been able to do this, something that I absolutely love, most of the time," he said. "I believe anybody in any profession that is able to make a living doing what they love should be considered lucky."

He is known not only for his work, but also his generosity and willingness to give back. He helped start the Sheridan Public Arts Committee, providing expertise curating the public art collection and recruiting artists from his network to showcase their work in Sheridan. He has also mentored fellow artists and dedicated time and energy to support statewide arts organizations.

His interest in the arts was first sparked while at a swim meet in Cody. His friend and mentor, Bob Barlow, who had two sons in competitive



The Salt Lick by T. Allen Lawson



Tim working on a new piece in his studio.

swimming, took Lawson to the Buffalo Bill Center of the West.

"It was the first museum I had ever gone to, which really, it blew me away," he said. "I lost all track of time and ended up staying for hours and forgot I was there for a swim meet and missed an event."

Then, he landed in the classroom of his junior high school art teacher Nancy Buening, who fostered love and passion for the arts.

"Miss Buening is really responsible for opening my eyes to the wonders of the arts, not just the visual arts, but all the arts and how the quality of life that immersing yourselves, oneself in the arts can give you."

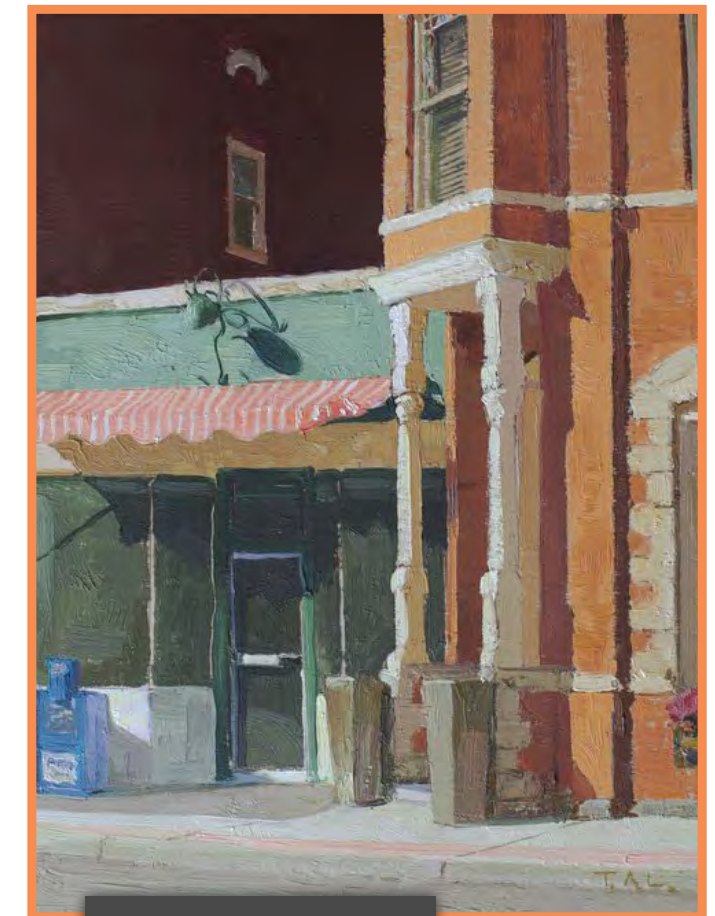
Growing up in Sheridan, Lawson said, "I always used to think of the middle part of the state as that dreadful place you had to get through to get to where you're going. Over time, that has become my favorite part of Wyoming. That's where I really see Wyoming's beauty in the less obvious... the feeling of how brutal some of the Wyoming winters can be or the grandeur of the sagebrush in springtime that the normal person may just pass by without noticing."

"What sets Tim apart is not only his immense talent," Kendra Heimbeck, Executive Director of The Brinton Museum, wrote in her letter of support, "but his humility and desire to push the boundaries of

his work while staying grounded in the values of his Wyoming roots,"

In an interview, she called out an exhibition held in 2018 at SAGE Community Arts, Hometown, showing small-scale scenes throughout Sheridan. "He really captures what it's like to be from Sheridan. He catches images of a solo truck parked at the local watering hole or a snowman in the yard of a home that's dimly lit during the wintertime and all of these images that seem familiar and are a really good representation of what it's like to be from Wyoming."

Lawson mentioned the difficulty, even after four decades, to achieve what he wants to on canvas. He appreciates this honor, but "if this award made painting what I'm working on on the easel right now easier, I would be much more excited about it. All of my struggles are within my own limitations of what I'm trying to convey, and that's one of the things that makes painting so wonderful, but also so challenging. There's no such thing as a perfect painting."



Missing Kevin by T. Allen Lawson

SUE AND ALBERT SOMMERS: COMMUNITIES FLOURISH WITH THE ARTS

By Susan Mark

Sue and Albert Sommers of Pinedale are a powerhouse duo in support of the arts in Wyoming. He was a powerful advocate for funding in the Wyoming State Legislature. She's a talented artist with a knack for both building networks and serving as promoter and ambassador. Both are passionate about the role of the arts in making Wyoming's communities – large and small – vibrant places to live.

"To me, it's all about community," Albert said. "How can we create better community and how can we use art to help be the glue in that community."

The award comes after they both stepped down from prominent positions – Albert as Speaker of

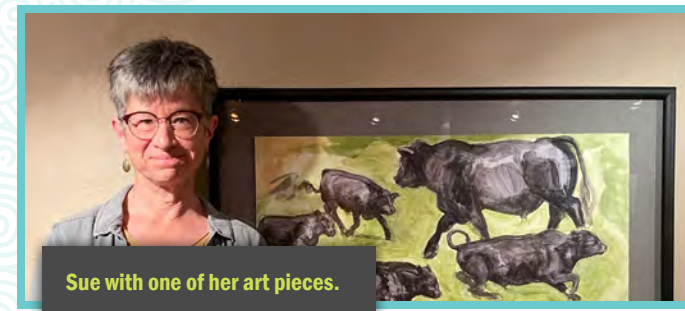
the House and Sue as President of the University of Wyoming Art Museum's Advisory Board, where she still serves as Past President.

"It seemed like a moment to celebrate them and all they've accomplished," said Susan Moldenhauer who, with Wendy Bredehoft, nominated the two for the Governor's Arts Awards. "They've done so much that we really felt like it was time to try and recognize them."

They've each learned from the other – Sue educating Albert on the importance of the arts, and Albert showing her the political side. It's turned them into a formidable tag-team.

Albert Sommers served in the Wyoming House of Representatives from 2013-2024. In a letter of support, fellow Representative Lloyd Larsen described Albert as the strongest advocate for the arts in the Legislature, most significantly in fully funding the Wyoming Cultural Trust Fund, an endowment "designed to have permanent ongoing funding for the cultural well-being of the state." Without Albert, Larsen wrote, it would not have happened.

"In Wyoming, we only have three funders of art programs," Albert said, "the Wyoming Cultural Trust Fund, the Wyoming Arts Council, and the Wyoming Humanities Council. These all support communities by bringing music, dance, visual arts, history, and literature to Wyoming. You bring all of these



Sue with one of her art pieces.

important things, it simply makes our communities more livable, more lively, more engaged, and more attractive to businesses. Ultimately, it keeps small town Wyoming alive."

Sue noted, "His steadfast support for funding for K-12 in the state is also funding for the arts because we need good art teachers, music teachers, we need teachers to do school plays with the kids. Albert has constantly championed good support for K-12."

Both spoke of the importance of experiencing art in person, as a community, rather than on a screen. Art is encountered in a different way in person, and it brings diverse people together for connection and conversations.

"When you are in the same room as a painting, you can zoom in with your eyes," Sue said. "You can almost smell the paint, you can sense the texture. When there are dancers thumping on the stage, you feel that in your body. And so to me, that is part of the magic."

Sue Sommers is an accomplished professional visual artist whose works include printmaking, painting, public art, and book art. Her collaborations with other artists have included the performance art piece "Cattle Text Interaction" (1993), and the "Power Switch" land art installation near Daniel, Wyoming (2014-2016). She holds a BFA in printmaking from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and an MFA in painting from the University of Wyoming.

"What draws me to her as an artist is that her art practice fully delves into the culture, history, politics, environment, and fabric of many aspects of Wyoming," wrote Mary Jane Edwards, University



Albert at his desk inside the Wyoming Legislature.

of Wyoming Professor of Arts Emerita, in a letter of support.

"What I love about Wyoming is that it's really easy to hear yourself think and to decide for yourself what you want to do," Sue said. "There's not a lot of pressure to create a certain way or create a certain kind of art. It's just a difficult place to promote and show art for a lot of us, and I think what I'm most proud of is creating conversations among artists... mostly showing up for each other and giving moral support and trying to make good things happen for each other."

She banded together with artist friends from Pinedale and Laramie to form Pipeline Art Project, intended to open doors for Wyoming artists beyond the state. She wrote numerous articles for WyoFile's regular "Studio Wyoming Review" and helped launch and administer the thriving Studio Wyoming Facebook group where artists share and connect. On the local level, she served on the Pinedale Fine Arts Council board.

As for the award, Albert said "I feel really honored. I'm really humbled by receiving it. I don't feel adequate, but I do feel like I have made a little difference in the time that I was in the arena."

Sue added, "I feel the same. This is very unexpected and humbling to be honored for doing what I couldn't help but do, and which I felt so necessary.



Albert and Sue at 2024 Gala UW Art Museum.

WILLIE LECLAIR: TRADITIONAL ARTIST

By Jackie Dorothy

Dressed in his trademark war bonnet and beaded buckskins, Willie LeClair would regale his audience through dance, sign language, and traditional stories. The son of an Eastern Shoshone rancher and white woman, LeClair would often say that he walked both worlds as an American Indian and as an American Cowboy.

"Dad would say he could play cowboys and Indians by himself," his adopted son Mark Harris said, a nod towards LeClair's well-known sense of humor and his past as a presenter and rodeo announcer.

Known for his smile and quick wit, LeClair was passionate about preserving the traditional ways of all tribes and peoples. Born in Fort Washakie, Wyoming, he had both a college education and learned the traditional teachings from both the Eastern Shoshone and Northern Arapaho Tribal elders.

"He brought people together and he connected the past with the present," Wyoming Humanities Director Shawn Reese said. "He has inspired generations of Wyomingites."

Reese said that LeClair was an ambassador for Wyoming and the Wind River Reservation across the globe. According to Harris, he shared the Eastern Shoshone culture and traditions so that people could learn and get a greater appreciation for not only the Shoshone culture, but for other people's cultures.



"Dad said many times, 'I'm not telling the Eastern Shoshone story. I'm telling my story. I happen to be Eastern Shoshone,'" Harris said. "He would say that his was not the only story but what he was sharing were his life experiences."

Through song, narration and dance, LeClair educated his audiences, giving them a greater insight into the Indigenous way of life both in the past and in modern society. He tried to encourage the Indian youth to be proud of their heritage and showed them that it was possible to achieve their potential without losing their cultural identity.

"He was dedicated to sharing those stories and teaching the next generation to keep those stories alive," Reese said. "Willie was one of the most prolific purveyors of Native American art and culture in Wyoming."

According to his own biography, LeClair taught Native Culture and Philosophies with seminars on cultural aspects of living, substance abuse/prevention, and healing. He used his cultural background as a foundation for his teachings of Indigenous craft, dance, and music conducting workshops for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous cultures.

"He loved getting his audience involved in the presentation," Harris said. "He would usually have quite a spread of traditional regalia and items that he put out so that before and after his actual presentation, people could come up and ask him about those items. He would explain to them what they were used for and how he made them, because he made almost all of his regalia and traditional items himself."

It was LeClair's stated goal to dispel existing stereotypes that encouraged people to view American Indians as figures in the historical past. By exposing audiences to diverse dances, regalia and songs, he hoped to instill the idea that American Indians are not all the same.

One commonality of the tribes was the plains sign language that LeClair was teaching and preserving in videos.

"He worked really hard in preserving our sign language," Shoshone language consultant Lynette St Clair said. "He worked with our young people and with inmates to try and preserve this traditional way of talking."

At the time of his passing, LeClair was recording the sign language to pass on to future generations.

"We're losing the elders and the wisdom keepers so fast now," Harris said. "He wanted to be sure that the sign language would be preserved."

He was also teaching the Shoshone culture in person to those that wanted to learn.

"He was present in museums and libraries across the state for decades," Reese said. "He taught,



Photos of Willie provided by his family.

through song, sign language and stories, the history and culture of not only the Eastern Shoshone, but tribes across the High Plains and Rocky Mountains."

LeClair will long be remembered not only for preserving the traditional ways of the Shoshone but for his love of his fellow man.

"He judged people by their heart," Harris said. "It didn't matter what color you were or how tall you were or how short you were. It was about what kind of a person you were. He loved his culture and he loved sharing that love with other people."

Before his death, LeClair wrote, "I will continue to do these presentations as long as I can and with the help of everyone that keeps asking us to come back with my beautiful wife by my side as support."

LeClair did just as he said he would, sharing the culture with those most in need until the Creator called him home.



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NATIONAL HERITAGE FELLOWSHIP

ERNIE MARSH AWARDED THE NATION'S HIGHEST HONOR IN THE FOLK AND TRADITIONAL ARTS

Ernie Marsh, a bit and spur maker from Big Horn County, has been awarded a National Heritage Fellowship, the nation's highest honor in the folk and traditional arts.

Marsh is recognized for his excellence in bit and spur making. He lives and works at his shop in rural Big Horn County outside of Lovell. Marsh is particularly well-known for making high-quality bridle bits in the California Vaquero style. Marsh is also dedicated to maintaining the tradition by passing it on to his own students and creating opportunities for others to learn about the tradition. In 1998, he became a founding member of the Traditional Cowboys Arts Association (TCAA), an organization devoted to preserving and promoting traditional art forms that are associated with Western cowboy culture. Through TCAA, Marsh has spent years educating about the significance and finer details of bit and spur making.

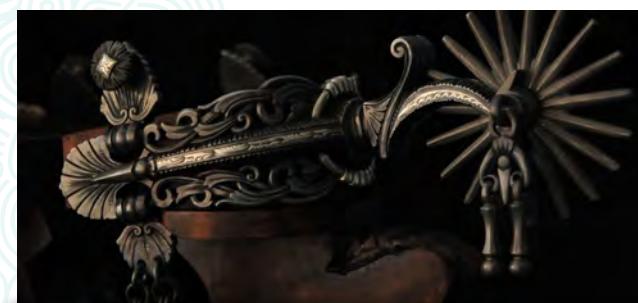
"Receiving a National Heritage Fellowship is an impressive accomplishment, and Ernie deserves this recognition for his work," said Josh Chrysler, Folklorist at the Wyoming Arts Council, which nominated Marsh for the award. "Not only is his work absolutely gorgeous while retaining function and utility, but Ernie has also devoted a major part of his career to teaching others and passing on his knowledge so



that this important Western tradition continues to thrive in Wyoming and across the West."

The National Heritage Fellowships recognize the recipients' artistic excellence and support their continuing contributions to the country's traditional arts heritage. Marsh joins four previous National Heritage Fellows from Wyoming: Don King, Western saddlemaker, 1991; Eva McAdams, Shoshone crafts and beadwork, 1996; Martin Goicoechea, Basque bertsolari poetry, 2003; and James Jackson, leatherworker, 2019. Marsh, along with other recipients from across the nation, will be honored in Washington, D.C. in September 2025.

Fellowship recipients are nominated by the public, often by members of their own communities, and then reviewed by a panel of experts. Visit the National Endowment for the Arts website for more information about the Fellowships or to submit a nomination.



Spanish Colonial spurs by Ernie Marsh. Photo credit Teresa Marsh.

MAKING A SPLASH IN WYOMING ARTS, ONE BOTTLE AT A TIME

A DECADE IN, THE SPIRIT OF WYOMING LABEL ART CONTEST HAS SUPPORTED THE STATE'S ARTISTS IN MYRIAD WAYS, AND SHOWS NO SIGNS OF SLOWING DOWN.

By Melissa Thomasma



Chas presented a check for \$10,000 to the Wyoming Arts Council board in Cheyenne in February 2025.

As Jackson Hole Still Works founders Chas Marsh and Travis Goodman prepared to launch their flagship spirit, Still Works Vodka, they recognized an unexpected opportunity. By placing the label on the back of the bottle — instead of the traditional spot on the front — the bottle's contents magnified it. Immediately, the pair knew that it was a great, albeit somewhat unorthodox, space to showcase exceptional artwork.

The pair joined forces with local painter Katy Ann Fox, who took up the original label project. "She came back to us with her first piece and it was just beautiful. It was a very real perspective of the Tetons from Antelope Flats," recalled Goodman. "She has this gift and we were just blown away."

Fox's painting was raffled off, with proceeds benefiting the Art Association of Jackson Hole. Tickets cost \$5 a piece. Before they knew it, they'd accrued \$14,000. "We collected all this money and we didn't really pay attention to the numbers. It wasn't until the end that we realized this was a lot more than we expected. And the light bulb went off for both of us immediately," Goodman said. "This is something that we should do every year as a way to raise money for the arts."

And with that, Wyoming's most innovative and impactful art contest was born.

Marsh and Goodman tapped Fox to design the competition's guidelines. Each year, eight finalists are

selected, and the public votes for a favorite among them. The winner, in addition to decorating the year's bottles of Still Works Vodka, receives a cash prize. The winning painting is sold, and all proceeds are now contributed to the Wyoming Arts Council.

"It's a really unique setup, a private business that supports artists directly. I can't think of any other program that exists with this kind of structure," observed Rachel Clifton, Executive Director of the Wyoming Arts Council (WAC). "It's amazing that this has sprung from their love of the arts and desire to support artists." Over the years, Clifton said, thousands of dollars have gone directly to Wyoming artists and the program's contribution to the WAC directly supports the Governor's Arts Awards.

Like the ripples sent out from a stone dropped in a pond, the positive impacts of the Jackson Hole Still Works art contest extend far beyond a cash prize and sizable charitable gift.

Steve Knox, a Cheyenne-based artist, had toyed with the idea of entering the contest before his official submission in 2020. "At first, I was just excited that I won!

But as I got to spend more time with Travis and Chas, it became really apparent that I could take that win and collaborate with them to turn it into a business plan," Knox said. "It was one of the biggest opportunities for my little art career. My work was being shipped across the country, was all over Jackson Hole social media; it really turned into an opportunity for me to step up my game and help my art business grow."

2025 contest winner from Laramie, Olivia Ewing, agreed that the opportunities for connection and exposure through the contest are meaningful in supporting artists. "Overall, I think this contest is a great way for emerging artists to get some visibility in Wyoming," she said. "Wyoming can feel really small sometimes and it is super important to create community and networks as an artist. I met so many folks during this process and I am so grateful to have made the connections that I



Travis and Chas with Olivia Ewing, the 2025 label contest winner.

did. There are a lot of artists in Wyoming and it doesn't always feel like there is a lot of opportunity, especially for artists who are new to the art scene."

Teton Valley-based artist Jason Borbay — whose rendition of a Jackalope won in 2017 — credits the contest's success entirely with Marsh and Goodman's dedication to fostering authentic relationships and seeking to support the arts in a meaningful way. "It's more than just slapping artwork on the bottle," he said. "Travis and Chas are so engaged to make it an amazing opportunity for the artists."

Since its inception, the Spirit of Wyoming label art contest has continued its momentum, and enthusiasm across the state continues to grow. Artists, a thriving Wyoming business, art aficionados, the Wyoming Arts Council and all of the creatives that their programming benefits — the positive reach of the contest is impossible to fully measure.

"Wyoming has an incredible amount of talent. We all know that. The more we can highlight that, the better it is for everyone. Whether you're from Wapiti or Cheyenne or Gillette or Rock Springs, doesn't matter where you're from, somebody out there has got some talent that the world needs to be more aware of," said Marsh. "And that's what we hope to do with this contest."

Fox, who remains an integral part of the contest alongside Marsh and Goodman, is enthusiastic for the future. "These guys truly are walking the walk," she said. "They go out of their way to embed themselves within the art community and make a difference. It's insanely special when you know how much easier it would be for them to do something simpler. It's really an inspiration."



Steve Knox with his winning 2020 artwork.

2025 WYOMING CHAMPION: ALEX BRADY

By Ismael Dominguez - Programs Specialist

After months of training, Alex Brady of Cheyenne East High School was selected by this year's panel of judges as the Poetry Out Loud state champion of Wyoming. Brady traveled to Washington, D.C. in May to represent the Equality State in the nation's capital, where he competed with 55 other high school students from across the country and U.S. territories for the title of National Poetry Out Loud Champion and for scholarship funds.

The premise of the competition was for students to memorize and recite a selection of poetry from each of three qualifying categories. During their performances, competitors were judged on a variety of criteria, from their interpretation of the piece to their recitation accuracy. Students first participated in a local competition, which ranged from entire high schools to individual classrooms. Local winners were then invited to the state competition, traditionally held in Cheyenne, to compete for the opportunity to travel to Washington, D.C.

This year, six students came from across the state to participate in the state competition in Cheyenne, where Governor Mark Gordon presented the awards at that evening's banquet. Participants represented the following schools: Moorcroft Secondary School, Buffalo High School, Cheyenne East High School, Worland High School, Fremont County Christian Homeschool Fellowship, and Lovell High School.

Poetry Out Loud not only sought to create a deeper appreciation for poetry, but also to educate students



Alex Brady of Cheyenne East High School was selected as the 2025 Poetry Out Loud state champion of Wyoming.

on how to carry confidence when speaking publicly, understand the nuance of tone and expression, and better utilize the intricacies of written and spoken language. Students practiced these skills while engaging with a community of peers.

POETRY OUT LOUD 20 YEARS

The 2024-25 season marked the twentieth celebration of Poetry Out Loud both nationally and in Wyoming. Over that time, POL reached more than 5,000 students in 170 Wyoming schools.

A teacher from this year's competition had this to say:

"POETRY IS A WAY OF THINKING AND SPEAKING CREATIVELY. IT IS IMPORTANT FOR A STUDENT TO SEE THE WORLD THROUGH OTHERS' EYES, AND POETRY MAKES THIS POSSIBLE."

For more information about the program or upcoming 2025-26 season, visit WyomingArtsCouncil.org or PoetryOutLoud.org.



From left to right, Dovelynn Martinson, Alex Brady, Governor Mark Gordon, Danica Schutt



From left to right, Evalyn Straub (Riverton, WY), Alex Brady (Cheyenne, WY), Danica Schutt (Moorcroft, WY), Kadence Aagard (Worland, WY), Sharon Wilkerson (Lovell, WY), Dovelynn Martinson (Buffalo, WY)

ART IS EVERYWHERE



Friday night Open-Mic performers included Doug Figgs (left) and Carol and Tony Messerly of Many Strings (right) Cowboy Gathering in Encampment, WY.



Wyoming Arts Council staff at the 42nd Annual Governor's Arts Awards in Cheyenne.



Mezzo-soprano Katherine Calcamuggio Donner and pianist Gabriel Evens performed all over Wyoming in May with the Piatigorsky Foundation.



Low Water String Band performing at the SPCR All Staff Conference in Lander.



Patrons at the Nicolaysen Art Museum (Casper) admiring artwork in the Rosenthal Gallery.



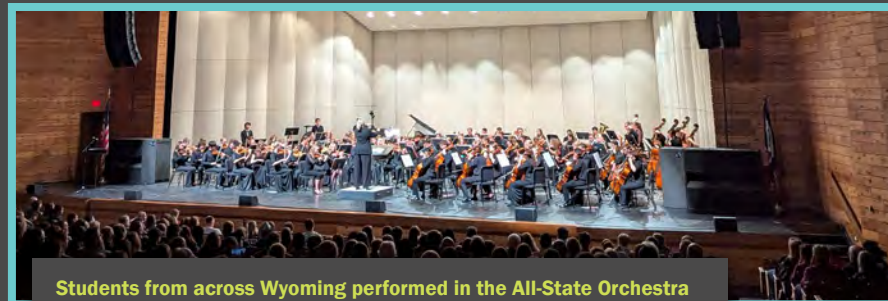
Dinosaur Cowboy by sculptor Christine Knapp now stands at the future Cheyenne Children's Museum. Shown (left to right): Tom Roberts, Harvey Deselms, Dixie Roberts and Sculptor, Christine Knapp.



Creatures for a Cause: Student Art & Mexican Myth Exhibition on display at Shari Brownfield Fine Art in Jackson this spring.



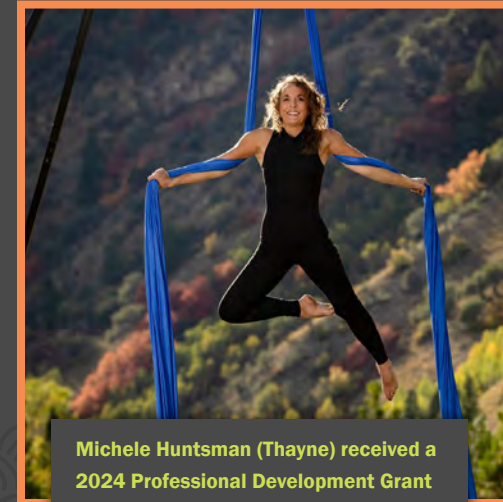
Dave and Julie Huebner of the Two Tracks performing for the Far-West Conference in Woodland Hills, CA with support from the Wyoming Arts Council.



Students from across Wyoming performed in the All-State Orchestra Gala Concert on January 21, 2025, at the Cheyenne Civic Center.



Local youth portray the Hawkins family in a production of "Treasure Island," with assistance from the Missoula Children's Theater in Kemmerer in February 2025.



Michele Huntsman (Thayne) received a 2024 Professional Development Grant for aerial arts.



WyAA interim director, Ryan Dinneen O'Neil presents at the Buffalo Bill Center for the West Museum in Cody as part of the 2025 WyAA Data Round-Up Listening Sessions that they are hosting around the state.



WAC board member Robert Martinez (right) at the Cheyenne Frontier Days Old West Museum's Spirit of the West exhibition, where he was awarded First Place in the Mixed Media category for his outstanding work.



A couple of creative aging participants working on their fall wreaths at the Green River Senior Center.



Kadence Aagard from Worland High School recites an original poem during the Poetry Ourselves event at the Cheyenne Botanic Gardens in February 2025.



Miracle Seminoe poses with young attendees following her Artist Talk Back during the opening reception of her Star Quilt Exhibit at The Center for the Arts in Jackson, held in May 2025.



Wyoming authors Zak Pullen (right) and Casey Rislov (left) with Legends Bookstore owner Kalyn Beasley at an April 16 book signing in Cody.



GOVERNOR'S CAPITOL ART EXHIBITION

KEY DATES

SEPTEMBER 3, 2025

Call for Entry Opens on CaFE:
www.callforentry.org

OCTOBER 18, 2025

Entry Deadline

NOVEMBER 19, 2025

Notification of accepted work

JANUARY 9, 2026

Accepted artwork due
at the Wyoming State Museum

FEBRUARY 7, 2026

Exhibit Opens

AUGUST 8, 2026

Exhibit Closes

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!



WYOMING STATE MUSEUM

2026 GOVERNOR'S CAPITOL ART EXHIBITION

Attention Wyoming artists! The call for entries for the 2026 Governor's Capitol Art Exhibition will be open from September 3 to October 18, 2025, on CaFE, www.callforentry.org. This year, the exhibition will be featured as part of Wyoming's tribute to America's 250th anniversary. Artists are encouraged to submit entries that celebrate Wyoming's breathtaking landscapes, vibrant communities, and the people who call our great state home. Selected pieces will be on exhibit from February 7 through August 8, 2026, at the Wyoming State Capitol in Cheyenne.

The Governor's Capitol Art Exhibition is a biennial juried exhibit that celebrates the work of Wyoming artists. The exhibition was established in 2000 under an initiative by Governor Geringer and is organized under the auspices of the Wyoming State Museum and the Wyoming Arts Council.

This exhibition is the primary avenue for the state museum to acquire contemporary Wyoming art for its Capitol and permanent collections. The art for the Capitol collection is selected by the State's five elected officials and representatives from other state agencies, while the museum's curators select purchase awards for the Museum's permanent art collection. All other artwork in the exhibition is available for sale to the general public.

The exhibit is open to artists currently working and living in Wyoming. There is no fee to enter.

Questions? Contact Nathan Doerr, Capitol Curator, at Nathan.Doerr1@Wyo.Gov or (307) 823-2935



YOUTH ARTS COUNCIL

THIS IS WHERE CREATIVE LEADERSHIP BEGINS

APPLICATIONS & NOMINATIONS OPEN **MAY 5, 2025**

CLOSE **AUGUST 22, 2025**

OFFICIAL NOTIFICATION **SEPTEMBER 2025**

**FIRST
COHORT
KICKS OFF
OCT 2025**

WHAT YOU'LL DO

- Be part of a statewide cohort shaping the future of the arts in Wyoming
- Build real-world skills in communication, collaboration, and advocacy
- Connect with artists + changemakers across Wyoming
- Explore careers in the creative sector
- Get hands-on experience with the creative work that shapes your community
- Shape and lead a youth-driven creative project
- Get paid to be involved

WHAT YOU'LL EXPLORE

- Leadership & Communication Skills
- Building Stronger Communities Through the Arts
- Event Planning & Arts Programming
- Arts Advocacy & Policy
- Grant Writing & Fundraising
- Youth-Led Topics & Creative Project
- Reflection, Celebration & Legacy

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Amara Fehring, amara.fehring@wyo.gov, TEXT: 307-630-3918





WYOMING
ARTS
COUNCIL

WYOMING ARTS COUNCIL

2301 Central Avenue
Cheyenne, WY 82002

Wyoming Governor's Arts Awards

2025 NOMINATION WINDOW
JULY 17 TO SEPT 18

Established in 1982, the Governor's Arts Awards recognize excellence in the arts and outstanding service to the arts in Wyoming. The Governor's Arts Awards honor organizations, individual artists, benefactors and contributors, advocates, and/or educators who demonstrate a significant contribution to the arts in Wyoming through long-term dedication and service, and statewide community engagement.

Additional information can be found on our website or by contacting Mandy Connelley at mandy.connelley@wyo.gov or (307) 214-2701

wyomingartscouncil.org