

CAUSES THAT MATTER



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WCF@WYCF.ORG
307-721-8300

Creative Communities for Older Wyomingites

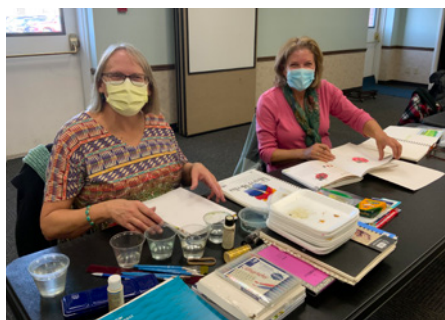
Wyoming Arts Council – Creative Aging in Wyoming Libraries
McMurry Library Endowment Fund

When you start a career as an artist, you don't always know where it will lead you. You may create large public works or installations. You may work for commissions. The truly fortunate artist, though, is the one whose art lets them connect with others.

Wyoming artist Jenn Beachler creates stunning books – designing, constructing, and illustrating them. But one of her other great passions is teaching art. She has mentored countless developing artists, from children to adults. Recently, she connected with older Wyomingites, helping them express themselves through art.

Jenn is one of the teaching artists who received training for Creating Aging in Wyoming Libraries. This Wyoming Arts Council (WAC)-led project was a recent WYCF grantee. Because of your support, artists like Jenn explored how to create artistic opportunities for older Wyomingites.

Libraries were a natural choice to host Creative Aging, says WAC creative arts specialist Taylor Craig. Libraries “are already deeply embedded our communities.” This makes them ideal for “folks that aren’t necessarily ready yet to go into a senior center, but are looking for camaraderie and community.”



Two “Sketchy Characters” at work. Because of your support, this community has a long-lasting arts program for creative aging.

A grant from WYCF allowed artists like Jenn to collaborate with libraries to help create these communities. Donors you like make this important work possible.

Taylor is not alone in her belief that art can help older Wyomingites. WAC recently surveyed Wyoming artists and arts administrators about which areas of health and wellness most concerned them. Creativity as part of healthy aging drew an overwhelming number of responses.

For Jenn, the WAC-led training “was one of the most energizing and validating experiences I have had in my growth as a teaching artist.” The project gave her the opportunity for professional growth. The instructors “were so informed and thorough, addressing the exact challenges

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STATS & FACTS

Grant Amount: **\$20,000**

40 teaching artists &
15 county library staff members
underwent online trainings



89% of trainees felt prepared to lead creative aging programs after training

“From a group of curious strangers, we’ve morphed into productive and talented friends, eager to push artistic boundaries and share our efforts. In a nutshell? We really needed this!”

– Creative Aging Participant



Where are the Caterpillars?

Greybull Recreation District – Monarch Butterfly Garden Habitat

Wyoming Youth for Natural Resources Fund (WYNR)

Roller-skating happened on Thursday nights over the summer at the Greybull Recreation Center. Youth would skate up to the front counter, eager to see their growth and ask, “Where are the caterpillars?”

They were tiny, about the size of a grain of rice. Kids looked forward to seeing the caterpillars grow. At first, the kids would need a magnifying glass to view them. Eventually they would turn into monarch butterflies.

“The caterpillars got here the first week of July. They didn’t turn into butterflies until early August,” says Heather Howe, Director of the Greybull Recreation District.

A grant from the Wyoming Wildlife Foundation made the Monarch Butterfly Garden Habitat Project possible.



Caterpillars on the first day.

“I attended the Wyoming Afterschool Alliance Conference and there was a Monarch Larvae Monitoring Program (MLMP) session. It taught us how to track monarchs in Wyoming, I really wanted to do that for the kids,” says Heather. “But we needed to be able to monitor them differently in our area.”

Heather asked the program leaders of MLMP if she could build a habitat that was a little safer for youth to participate. The Monarch Larvae Monitoring Program thought it was a great idea.

“Where milkweed grows around here it’s not child friendly; there are ditches, fields, roads and maybe snakes,” says Heather. “I wanted to incorporate this project into our programming and have it not be dangerous.”

Because of thoughtful donors like you, Heather was able to purchase supplies to make raised garden bed habitats for monarchs. Youth will get to help track them and see them thrive in the future.

“Now we have a ton of milkweed in our gardens for the caterpillars. There’s a lot of plants for them back there,” says Heather. “We have supplies in storage, seeds for seed bombs, butterfly house kits, and butterfly magazines for kids to use again and again.”

STATS & FACTS

Grant Amount: **\$602**

25 Monarch larvae ordered from the program for youth to observe



Youth participating are ages

9 and up 

Grant funds allowed youth to participate for **\$2-\$5** in the project

The grant helped purchase a drip irrigation system, plants, seeds, caterpillars and habitat signs.



A House for Renewing Hope

Hope House Casper

Tony Cate and Grace Amspoker Funds

“People, places, things...” repeats Dave Matthews, director of Hope House. Based near Casper’s north side, Hope House provides a home for men returning from incarceration. It gives them hope of a fresh start, and of recovery from addiction. But when they return to the people, places, and things from their pasts, those hopes are easily dashed. So, the residents must work to build new lives. Dave’s job is to help them do this.

A New Place

Since its founding in 2017, Hope House has had an important impact on Casper and the state. Hope House’s recidivism rate is about

half of the country’s average rate. These low reoffense numbers effect the whole community. Incarceration costs about fourteen times as much as accommodation at Hope House, meaning the program has remarkable financial benefits.

“They are stellar human beings.”

Dave’s focus on helping residents become contributing members of their communities is key to Hope House’s success. And your generosity has helped make this success possible. For three years, WYCF

grants have helped these men go back – and *give* back – to their communities.

New Things

Healing begins with feeling safe, stable, and at home. Each resident has a comfortable, fully equipped

apartment. New residents receive a welcome pack, including linens, towels, a bus pass, and a grocery gift card. All of these, observes Dave,

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STATS & FACTS

Daily cost to incarcerate:

\$239 💰

\$17 per day to support a Hope House resident

National recidivism rate:

44%

Hope House recidivism rate:

25%

Community partners: Wyoming Marathon, 12-24 Club, Wyoming Dept. of Corrections, Wyoming Rescue Mission, Casper Police Department, Therapeutic Community



Hope House has given second chances to dozens of men because of your support.

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teaching artists face and providing tools” to ensure success.

Jenn has now taught two Creative Aging classes, and they have had a lasting impact. She and her students still meet at their local library for a monthly sketch club. “We spend time working in our art journals doing whatever inspires us, and then chatting and sharing our work. We decided to call our club ‘Sketchy Characters’.”

If the Sketchy Characters are any indication, projects like Creative Aging in Wyoming Libraries are clearly making a lasting difference in Wyoming. This difference is made possible because of your support.

“A House for Renewing Hope” continued

are the “little things that make such a big difference.”

Generous supporters like you have helped make this big difference.

New People

Even more important than a new place and new things are Hope House’s people. Each week, the whole house gathers to reflect on challenges and opportunities. They offer each other empathy, advice, and accountability. This community-based recovery model gives the men ownership over their own healing while becoming invested in each other’s. They get encouragement from the best possible people: those who have been in their shoes.

Dave has been in those shoes himself, and is one of the most important new people for Hope House residents. Drawing on his experience with addiction, he believes fiercely in the potential of each Hope House resident.

Dave has deep appreciation for Hope House’s partner nonprofits and agencies. But it is the residents themselves that most inspire him. “It’s so encouraging to see someone come from prison that has so many strikes against them, and they’re able to be the man they’re supposed to be,” says Dave. “They are stellar human beings.”

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UPCOMING EVENTS



Register for the Wyoming
Nonprofit Conference NOW!

May 16-18, 2022

Ramkota Hotel and Conference Center
Casper, WY

Visit wycf.org/wnc2022 to register!



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how you’ve helped Wyoming
thrive in good and bad times.

1472 N. 5th Street, Suite 201
Laramie, WY 82072
wycf@wycf.org
wycf.org
307.721.8300