

On the Path

Photography Focus of Swan Range Community

By Keith Hammer

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The community really pulled together for the Celebrating the Swan Range photography exhibit shown at the Bigfork Museum of Art and History August 25 through September 5! While the effort began last April and culminated with the exhibit, the photographs will continue to foster greater appreciation of the Swan Range far into the future!

Of the 72 digital photos entered in the contest in April and May, virtually all were donated for nonprofit educational use by Swan View Coalition and 48 were chosen by jury to be printed for the subsequent exhibit. A full-house opening reception kicked off sales of the exhibited photos and, by the close of the show, nearly half had sold to benefit the art of photography and Swan Range conservation!

Jury's Choice and People's Choice Awards were made for best photo in each of four categories in both the amateur and professional divisions. Amateur photographers winning awards were Diana Adkins, Lynne Brett, Caroline Riss, Lawrence Stolte, and Joel Vignere. Professional photographers winning awards were Dee Blank and Rick Sheremeta.

Other photographers that entered the contest were Edd Blackler, Stuart Cole, Laurie Darrow, Ralph DeLange, Ken Dvorak, Paul Erlen, Mark Evanoff, Holland Gauthier, Dan Hartwell, Colleen Hathaway, Mike Healy, Robert Hermes, Evan Hogue, Spencer Jenko, Leslie Kuntz, Kara Love, Paulette Love, John McCabe, John Mercer, Steve Mitchell, Brian Parks, Charline Payne, Tom Payne, Mark Rice, Adelle Scholl, Linda Sole, Sarah Taylor, Brett Thuma, Jeb VanDenburg, Apryll Verboven, Joost Verboven, Susan Waldron, and Pam Willison.

Many area businesses contributed to the effort by donating prizes for the awards. Participating businesses included Bill Hunger Therapeutic Massage, Bonelli's Bistro, Burch's One Hour Photo Digital, Don Gee Woodworking, Echo Lake Café, El Topo Cantina, Electric Avenue Gifts, Great Northern Foods, INVITE, Kravingz Café and Bakery, Medicine Owl Massage, Montana Coffee Traders, Mountain Brook Studio, Mountain Valley Foods, River Street Diner and Pub, Rocky Mountain Outfitter, Rosa's Pizza, Saketome Sushi, Swan Valley Herbs, and Wheaton's Cycling and Fitness.

On behalf of Swan View Coalition, I'd like to express our heartfelt thanks to all of the folks and businesses that helped make the photo exhibit a successful exploration of the many ways the wonderful Swan Range enriches our daily lives. A special thanks goes to Marnie Forbis and the Bigfork Museum of Art and History for co-hosting the exhibit.

In case you missed the exhibit, the eight Jury Award winning photographs can be viewed in color by downloading Swan View Coalition's "Summer 2009" newsletter from www.swanview.org. Accompanying this article are the two exceptional photographs granted People's Choice Awards by viewers of the exhibit without having previously won a Jury's Choice Award.

While a picture is indeed worth a thousand words, the kind words Edd Blackler submitted with his photograph nonetheless capture how many of us feel: “The Swan Range provides me with tremendous inner enrichment in all seasons.”

Keith Hammer grew up hiking, skiing, camping, hunting, and fishing in the Swan Mountains. He has worked a number of jobs, from Forest Service trail worker to logger to backcountry guide, and currently works as an environmental consultant and head of the nonprofit Swan View Coalition. His column appears regularly in this paper and is archived at www.swanrange.org. Keith can be reached at 406-755-1379 or keith@swanview.org.



Timeless Travel. Diana Adkins photo.



On the Trail to Crater Lake. Joel Vignere photo.