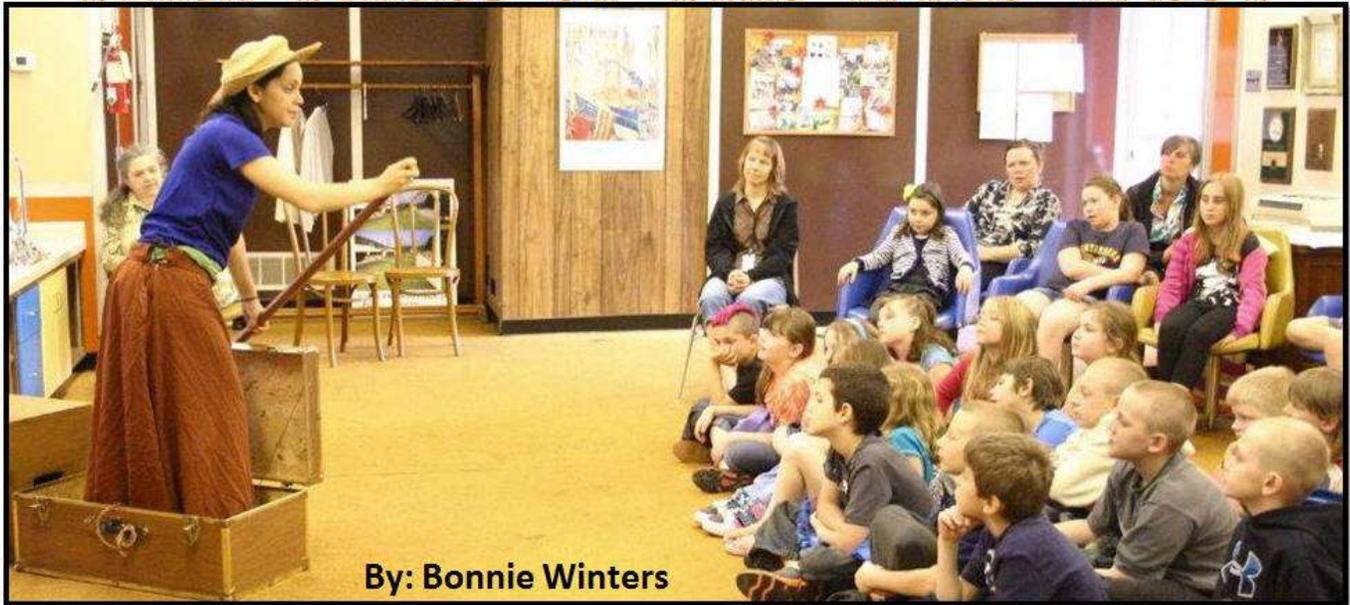


TALL TALES OF THE WILD WEST



By: Bonnie Winters

Annie Christmas in Friendsville. Image courtesy of Bonnie Winters.

Have y'all heard of Pecos Bill, Paul Bunyan, and Annie Christmas? Nora Achрати of New Moon Theater in Baltimore took Garrett county audiences on a fun-filled romp through these tales from American Folklore. *Tall Tales of the Wild West*, a monologue that incorporates audience participation, attracted a total crowd of 733 children and adults.

Each performance began with a rousing "Howdy" from Nora. "Howdy is cowboy speak for hello. And I bet you're here to see the greatest cowgirl in the United States." With that, she attempted to demonstrate her skill with the lasso, only to succeed in lassoing herself, causing a roar of laughter from the group, and admitting that she wasn't that great of a cowgirl after all. She moved on then to the telling of the legendary tales. "The bigger the story,"

she said, "the better. That's why they're called tall tales."



From the story of Pecos Bill, the greatest of cowboys who was raised by coyotes, to the legend of 22-foot-tall lumberjack Paul Bunyan and his buddy Babe, the big blue ox, and on to the tale of Annie Christmas, a seven-foot tall woman who poled a keelboat up and down the Mississippi River, Nora kept the show rolling.

Nora Achрати of New Moon Theatre demonstrates her lassoing skills at Grantsville elementary. Image courtesy of Bonnie Winters.

And with each character, she enlisted help from the children. Pecos Bill needed a lasso and a horse, which came in the form of a rattlesnake and mountain lion that he encountered along the way. Paul Bunyan needed someone to act as Babe, the big blue ox, and Annie Christmas needed a whistle, smokestacks, a big wheel, and a captain for her final ride up the Mississippi on a steamboat. There was no problem recruiting eager kids to act out these parts at any of the performances. When Nora asked for volunteers, a good half to two-thirds of the hands went up.

At the close of the play, Nora reminded the audience that all the characters had overcome obstacles along the way, and that they had in the end succeeded. Pecos Bill became a cowboy in spite of being told he couldn't, Paul



Paul Bunyan enlists the help of a young audience member at Kitzmiller. Image courtesy of Bonnie Winters.

Bunyan cleared the Dakotas because he put his mind to it, and Annie took her keelboat up the Mississippi River despite being told that no one was strong enough to pole against the current. "Put your mind to it. You can do it," she told the group. And she promised to practice those lassoing tricks before she came back to see the kids again.

New Moon Theater is a touring company based in Baltimore, Maryland, with full-time, professionally trained theater artists who are dedicated to bringing exciting, imaginative live performances to children and family audiences. The Ruth Enlow Library extends a big thank-you to WMRL for the programming grant that made these performances in Garrett County possible.