

# Students decorate hearts for public lands

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Amy Ruiz lightly feathered paint onto a fiberglass heart last week as she reminisced on memories made on public lands she holds near to her own heart.

Ruiz and Claire Warren, both seniors at McCall-Donnelly High School, were selected as student artists for the Payette Land Trust's Conserving the Heart of Idaho Campaign.

The fiberglass hearts painted by Ruiz and Warren will be auctioned off by the land trust Feb. 11 at the Shore Lodge Pavilion. The two hearts will be auctioned alongside a larger fiberglass heart painted by local artist Colleen Hanley-Prior that has been placed around McCall since last summer as part of the trust's campaign.

Ruiz's heart, called "I hold you close," features imprints of her hands cradling the heart from its base, with paintings showing spring, summer, fall and winter in each quadrant of the heart.

"I hold all the seasons and

McCall close to me," Ruiz said of the heart. "My design showcases the four seasons, like for the four chambers of the human heart."

Meanwhile, Warren's heart is called "Life in the Wild" and features a large cutthroat trout on one side with a backdrop of a glowing sunset and a night sky dotted with constellations. The other side of the heart depicts major waterways in Idaho, including Payette Lake, the Salmon River and the Snake River.

"I grew up rafting on the river, so water is very close to my heart," Warren said.

Ruiz and Warren were selected from five local art students who applied for the contest by submitting drawings of their proposals, said Sonya Mapp, community outreach and program manager for the land trust.

The selection committee included Hanley-Prior, a Boise State University art professor, a McCall Public Art Advisory Committee member and two land trust representatives.

Bids for the two student hearts at auction will start at \$500, while bids for the larger heart painted by Hanley-Prior will start at \$1,500.

Ruiz and Warren were both inspired to enter the heart-painting contest by fond childhood memories on public lands and their fear that development could take the lands away.

"It's just kind of hard to find quiet nowadays," Warren said. "It used to be lot quieter when I was younger than it is now."

Ruiz and Warren each used acrylic paint to decorate the hearts, a process that took about 20 hours. For their efforts, they received a \$150 reward from the land trust.

The Conserving the Heart of Idaho Campaign is aimed at raising awareness of the land trust's conservation of open lands around McCall to boost fundraising efforts.

The Payette Land Trust is a non-profit organization that works to conserve land in west central Idaho through conservation easements that



Photo by Drew Dodson/The Star-News

**McCall-Donnelly High School seniors Amy Ruiz (left) and Claire Warren work on painting fiberglass hearts to be auctioned off on Feb. 11 at the Shore Lodge Pavilion as part of the Payette Land Trust's Conserving the Heart of Idaho Campaign.**

are purchased or donated to the trust. Conservation easements permanently restrict future development rights

on land but allow the private landowner to retain use and ownership of the property. The trust currently holds

conservation easements on over 3,000 acres of land in Valley, Adams, Idaho and Washington counties.