

Local residents participate in “Keep Their Light Shining,” the recent international candlelight vigil held in honor of the wild horses and Burros of America

Animal welfare advocates recently gathered across the nation in 30 candlelight vigils for America’s wild horses and burros. On the same day, December 15<sup>th</sup>, others were held in Canada, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

The vigils took place in recognition of the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the passing of the Wild Free Roaming Horses and Burros Act.

One such vigil was held at the Mountain View Cemetery overlooking Reno.

Some of the members of Dayton’s Wild Horse Preservation League, attended the ceremony, which held special meaning for them as “Wild Horse Annie” is buried at the cemetery. Velma B. Johnston, aka, ‘Annie’ almost single-handedly was responsible for getting the act passed into law and had lived in the Virginia Range close to Dayton.

Vigil Coordinator, Carrol Abel, said: “While congressional intent of the original act has been greatly diluted over the years, we feel it important to have acknowledged this date. The management of wild horses and burros should be based on science rather than political manipulations, like the Burns Amendment, which allows for the mass slaughter of America’s wild horses and burros.”

27 wild horse advocates stood around the gravesite, holding individual candles, many of whom took turns speaking of their personal experiences in helping to protect the wild ones. 148 candles encircled ‘Annie’s’ gravesite in recognition of the 148 horses killed in the Bureau of Land Management’s 2010 Calico Roundup in Nevada.

Over 600 people from around the world responded on Face Book to ‘Keep Their Light Shining.’ Debbie Laws, from England, wrote she was lighting a candle for the wild horses and burros. To her, they represent what America stands for - truth, honesty and freedom. Abel said, “I was astounded by the sheer number of people who wanted to be involved in the vigils, even those who couldn’t physically participate in them, placed lighted candles in their windows.”

On December 15, 1971, President Richard Nixon, after signing the landmark legislation into law, said: “Wild horses and burros merit man’s protection historically for they are a living link with the days of the conquistadors, through the heroic times of the western Indians and pioneers, to our own day when the tonic of wilderness seems all too scarce. More than that, they merit it as a matter of ecological right – as anyone knows who has ever stood awed at the indomitable spirit and sheer energy of a mustang running free.”

At the same time the Reno vigil was going on, a similar one was being held in front of the Legislative building in Carson City.