

MEDIA ADVISORY

December 1, 2022

Karen Vuranch's play *Coal Camp Memories* is Staging at Welch, WV for National Coal Miner Day on December 6th

*Karen Vuranch weaves together a love of history, a passion for stories and a sense of community and will showcase this in the one woman play, **Coal Camp Memories**. Karen has toured throughout the US with her traditional storytelling and living history performances and has also performed China, Wales and England.*

For Immediate Release: McDowell County, West Virginia – Karen Vuranch's **play *Coal Camp Memories*** is coming to Welch, West Virginia, on Tuesday, December 6 at the Jack Caffrey Center at 155 McDowell Street, Welch, WV. The event starts at 6:30pm to recognize National Coal Miner's Day and is part of the annual CoalTown, USA events calendar. The play will be preceded by a Coal Miner's Dinner of bologna sandwiches, brown beans, and cornbread and the cost is \$10 per person and includes dinner. The public is invited and tickets can be purchased in advance at City Hall.

This play is a one-act drama, written and performed by Karen Vuranch. Karen researched life in the coal fields of West Virginia by talking to those who lived in the coal camps. It chronicles the story of Hallie Marie Jones, a woman from a West Virginia coal camp. When Hallie Marie was a little girl, life was simpler. She walked to a one-room school and her biggest problem was that "mean ole Jimmy Kent." As life goes on in a West Virginia coal camp of the 1920s and Hallie Marie grew up, she fell in love with Jimmy Kent, married him and raised a family in a coal camp on Cabin Creek. Life didn't seem so simple after all and, after Jimmy dies in a mine accident, Hallie is faced with raising her children alone.

"We are thrilled to highlight National Coal Miner's Day in Welch. We believe this play paired with the Coal Miner's Dinner shows the sacrifices that are a part of our living history, and we are proud to highlight the traditions and sacrifice that so many of our citizens have lived," said Welch Mayor Harold McBride.

"Ever since the establishment of McDowell County in 1858, the main source of income for its residents has been derived from the coal mining industry. The population boomed during the 1950s and 1960s and reached more than 100,000 residents and Vuranch's play highlights the heritage and perseverance that mirrors that of Welch and our coal mining families, including mine," McBride continued.

In addition to her work as a storyteller and actor, Karen taught Theatre at Concord University. She just retired from Concord in May of 2022 and serves as a free-lance consultant for the Coal Heritage Highway Authority. For this organization, she wrote and developed their Interpretation Plan, organized an event celebrating coalfield baseball, directed an oral history project and designed interpretive signs.

"Vuranch's play paints a sometimes funny, sometimes moving, but always realistic picture of life in a coal camp.... Believe me, it is a play worthy of attention." *The Beckley Register Herald*
Hallie Marie's story is a composite of many people who lived during those times. Vuranch ages in front of the audience and grows from an exuberant ten-year-old to a demure? teenager, to a young wife, to an old woman wise with years. During the scene changes, a traditional musician plays Appalachian music. ***Coal Camp Memories*** is a tender and poignant story that will recreate an era and will delight audiences of all ages.

Welch is a city located in McDowell County, West Virginia at the confluence of the Tug and Elkhorn rivers. Incorporated in 1893, its history showcases the Appalachian perseverance that helped build America. It is the county seat of McDowell County and located in the heart of the mountains of Coal Country, USA. Visit www.cityofwelch.com for more information.

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