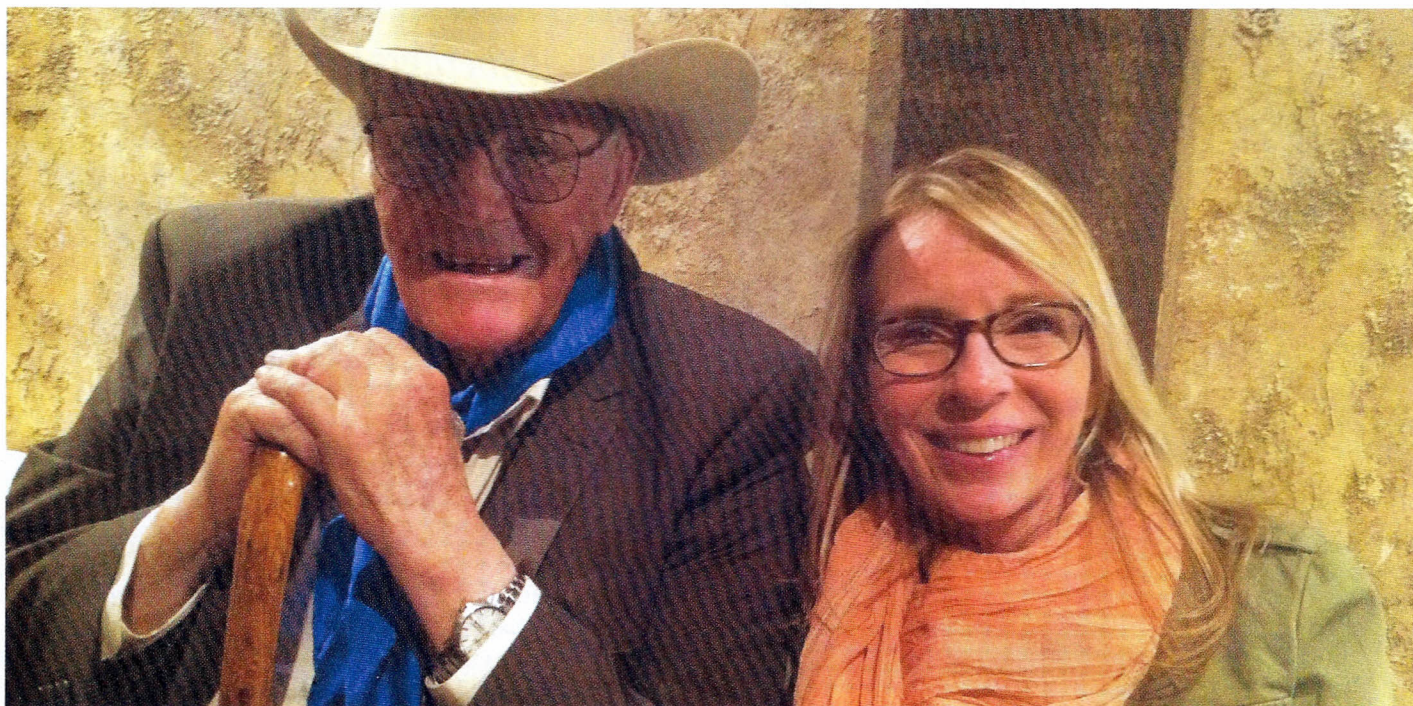


Running Wild With Horses

Filmmaker Suzanne Mitchell debuts her fascinating documentary on Dayton O. Hyde — a film that's been in the making for the last 11 years.



From left, an old-style cowboy Dayton O. Hyde and filmmaker Suzanne Mitchell. "Running Wild: The Life of Dayton O. Hyde" will debut Oct. 4.

Photo by Olivia Turrell

by Lisa Iannucci
Editor

Writers, film producers and other creative minds look for an amazing story to tell. Once they find it, they live and breathe it until that next great story comes along. This month, Suffern resident and award-winning filmmaker Suzanne Mitchell, owner of Running Wild Films, debuts her amazing story, a documentary that is 11 years in the making. It's the story of Dayton O. Hyde, one of the few remaining real cowboys and his passion for preserving the way of life in the prairies of the American West.

Mitchell's a fascinating story in her own right. Her broadcast career began in New York as the feature producer for Metromedia's 10 n'clock News, where she won her first Emmy for Best Local News Documentary, for the "Tin Pan Alley" celebrating the art of music song writing.

Mitchell fell in love with long-form storytelling and on-location production during documentary shoots for Lee Iacocca

and Ford Motor Corp., in Africa and Europe. Hired by Fox Television to help create its first news magazine show, The Reporters, Mitchell exhibited a flair for obtaining notable exclusive interviews, a talent she tapped effectively as producer for Geraldo from 1989 to 1992.

"I think it was a natural progression to do documentaries because I was doing character-driven type shows," she says. In 1992, Mitchell worked on a two-hour

People magazine special. When she went through 20 years of People magazine for great stories to tell, she came across a short piece on Dayton O. Hyde.

"I spent five days with this man and then was pulled away to do another story, but his story was so engaging," she says. "He is a savior of wild horses. How do you get that into a minute and a half? I kept the story in the back of my mind and someone told me they had never seen me so affected. At that moment, I vowed to do a film about him."

And she did. Over the next 11 years, Mitchell worked on "Running Wild: The Life of Dayton O. Hyde" which debuts Oct. 4. It examines the inspirational life of Hyde as a modern-day renaissance man and one of the last old-style cowboys. For the last 25 years, he has managed the breathtaking 12,000-acre Black Hills Wild Horse Sanctuary in South Dakota, where more than 500 mustangs now run free — all rescued from the controversial wild horse roundups.

Mitchell has debuted the film at various film festivals and, when asked for advice for other documentary filmmakers, she says, "Never take no for an answer."

Her passion for animals and the environment has led to two other projects. "We always wanted a house from the 1700s and we purchased one in Suffern that a British major owned after the Revolutionary War," she says. "It's been written about in history books and the house became famous because of a big bank robber who kidnapped the local farmer's daughter out of the second story and hid her," says Mitchell, who obtained designation of the house for the National Historic Registry.

In 2010, Mitchell started rosa4rockland.org, to combat the overdevelopment of the Patrick farms. The mission: "represent the interests of area residents in their demand for a safe, legal, sustainable, and well-planned land use solution for the Patrick Farm property; a plan that will protect our shared water supply, the environment and the character of the community."

"I think things happen for a reason because if I hadn't taken years to do this film, I wouldn't have known about the most critical threat about uranium mining."

Suzanne Mitchell is a story that, for this writer, can go on forever. She's a fascinating filmmaker and humanitarian, and Suffern Life will work with her on future articles.

Visit the *Running Wild* website runningwildfilm.com; the *Black Hills Wild Horse Sanctuary* website: wild-mustangs.com; and the *Dayton O. Hyde* website: daytonohyde.com.



Suzanne Mitchell and Hansel.

Photo by Olivia Turrell

1996

Suzanne Mitchell was an independent producer since 1996 for The Oprah Winfrey Show and Harpo Productions' 2008 Martin Luther King special.

Here's your chance to see this documentary in the Suffern area. Running Wild will premiere on Saturday, Oct. 5 at 6 p.m. at the Lafayette Theater in Suffern, followed by a fundraiser event and concert to benefit ROSA at Gary Goldberg Financial Services Montebello Mansion (for more on ROSA4Rockland, see the blurb below). For info: rosa4rockland.org or runningwildfilm.com/screenings. There will also be updated information on other showings.

ROSA4ROCKLAND

The Patrick Farm property at Routes 202 and 306 in Ramapo is at the center of ROSA's efforts to prevent inappropriate development in Rockland County. Filmmaker Suzanne Mitchell has been instrumental in the effort to protect this land, and her organization ROSA continues its legal battle to prevent this major development. The property consists of 208 acres, forested with environmentally sensitive wetlands, and a compelling history. Slated for major development and high density housing, 14 retention basins, sitting on top of a gas main. For more information, visit rosa4rockland.org. —Lisa Iannucci

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Filmmaker Suzanne Mitchell has worked hard to protect Patrick Farm.

Photo by Ross Pilot