

# Small Publisher's Book Gallops Off with Big-time Awards

*Modern-day Western for juvenile readers is a dark horse winner*

COLORADO SPRINGS, CO, UNITED STATES, September 24, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Colorado author Darby Karchut's *THE HORSE WHO CARRIES THE STARS* (Owl Hollow Press, 2024) won both

“

Karchut's adolescent protagonist delivers believable, charming first-person narration. . . the surprisingly suspenseful final act leads readers to a worthy denouement.”

*Kirkus Reviews*

the 2025 Western Writers of America Spur Award for Juvenile Fiction and the Women Writing the West's 2025 WILLA Literary Award (named in honor of Willa Cather) for Middle Grade Fiction & Nonfiction. The book is currently a finalist for the upcoming 2025 High Plains International Book Award and the 2025 Will Rogers Medallion Award.

This neo-Western, set in modern-day Colorado, features a reluctant protagonist, Reece Harding, who hates the thought of approaching teenhood, one Appaloosa mare with more go than whoa, and a desperate race to save a

herd of horses from a deadly wildfire.

Darby Karchut drew upon her own adolescences on horseback in New Mexico for the story. “I'll admit a lot of my protagonist's knuckleheaded decisions were actually mine. But beyond the coming-of-age aspect, I wanted to write about the love and respect and stewardship rural kids and teens have for the land. About a young girl who knows exactly where her roots and boots are planted. A great many Middle Grade books focus on young teens' feelings of not belonging, which is such a valid emotion for that age. But, at the same time, there are a lot of readers who do know where they belong and are empowered by it, be it a special neighborhood, a remarkable family, or even a ranch in Colorado.”

*THE HORSE WHO CARRIES THE STARS* is Karchut's twelfth Middle Grade novel, but it is her first one featuring a female main character. “Yes, it was a stretch for me, but once I discovered Reece's world view and “heard” her voice, I had a hoot writing her story, even though I'm best known for writing boy protagonists; my favorite will always be Matt Del Toro from my *DEL TORO MOON* series. Fans often ask me why boy protagonists instead of girls? Simply stated: I believe writers all have that special lens through which they see the world. I tend to process the Big Questions of life from the viewpoint of a young teen boy. That's my lens.”

Kirkus Reviews notes "...a superb cast highlights this quiet, insightful tale of inter-species friendship."

Megan E. Freeman, author of the New York Times bestselling novel in verse, *ALONE*, calls *THE HORSE WHO CARRIES THE STARS* "a page-turning story of courage, friendship, and the power of loving an animal..."

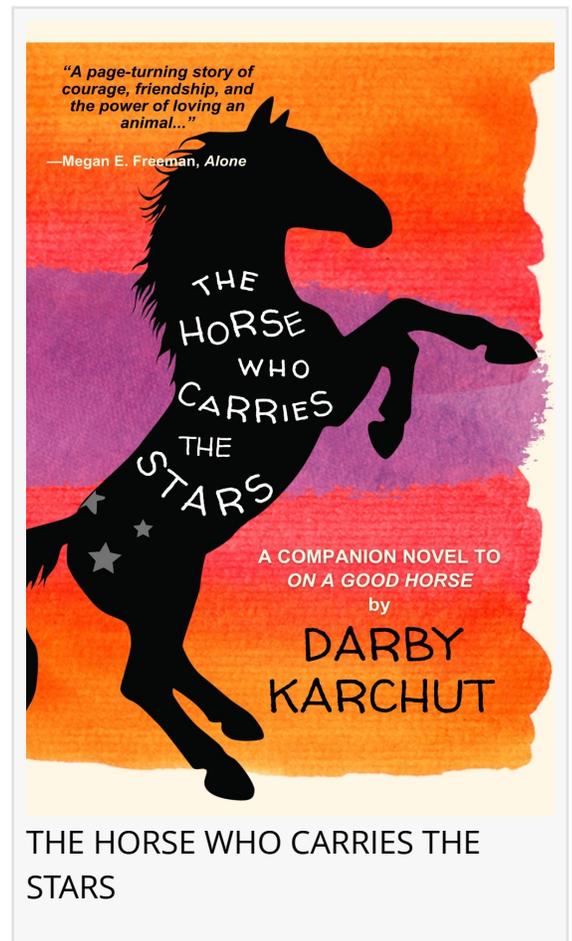
*THE HORSE WHO CARRIES THE STARS* is Darby Karchut's fifth book with Owl Hollow Press. Founded by publisher Emma Nelson, the company's focus is "world-altering stories, real and imagined." For more information about the author and her other books, visit [www.darbykarchut.com](http://www.darbykarchut.com) or [www.owlhollowpress.com](http://www.owlhollowpress.com).

The book is available from booksellers worldwide.

Darby Karchut author  
Darby Karchut author  
darbykarchut@gmail.com

Visit us on social media:

[Instagram](#)  
[Facebook](#)



This press release can be viewed online at: <https://www.einpresswire.com/article/851422642>

EIN Presswire's priority is source transparency. We do not allow opaque clients, and our editors try to be careful about weeding out false and misleading content. As a user, if you see something we have missed, please do bring it to our attention. Your help is welcome. EIN Presswire, Everyone's Internet News Presswire™, tries to define some of the boundaries that are reasonable in today's world. Please see our Editorial Guidelines for more information.

© 1995-2025 Newsmatics Inc. All Right Reserved.