

Creativity, Opportunity and Community

by Molly Huddle

In a bright, energetic studio in Napoleon, creativity fills the air.

Paintings, ceramics, and colorful artwork line the walls, each piece reflecting the individuality of the artists who created them.

Since opening in 2009, the Soaring Arts Studio located at 119 W Washington Street, Napoleon, Ohio has served as a place where artistic expression and community connection thrive.

More than just an art studio, Soaring Arts functions as a creative program designed to empower adults with developmental disabilities.

The space provides opportunities for participants to express themselves through art while also building valuable life and workplace skills.

Through hands-on activities and collaborative learning, artists not only explore

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Mary Cole's artwork exhibit.



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Soaring Arts mural in the Pocket Park, located on W. Washington Street in Napoleon, Ohio.

FARMLAND NEWS – A Gift That Lasts All Year!

Poor Will's Farmland News Almanack

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March 18 - 24

As if to yield ends one's life?

As if one is forever encased,

ice settled upon one's branches, a rigid coating sealing all pores, blocking all doors.

Are the trees afraid when spring startles?

They can't imagine leafing,

sunk in the comfort winter

finally granted, frost-clothed.

One has to fool them forward

Lure by light filtered oddly

and disguised in cold winds,

But then, don't even the trees surrender?

Barbara Valdez

Phases of the Red-Winged Blackbird Moon And the Robin Chorus Moon

March 11: The Moon enters its final quarter.

March 18: The Robin Chorus Moon is new

March 25: The Moon enters its second quarter.

March 31: The Moon is full.

The Sun

Equinox occurs at 10:45 a.m. on March 20

The Weather in the Week Ahead

With equinox, the chances of highs in the 20s fall below five percent for the first time since the middle of December, but the 18th brings the greatest chance of frost in the entire month - a full 90 percent chance.

March 20th is typically the wettest day of the week, with a 60 percent chance of precipitation and the most thunderstorms since autumn.

The 21st is the driest, with just a 25 percent chance.

The 21st also brings the most sun of any day in the third week of March: 70 percent of those days are clear to partly cloudy.

Only two other March days get so bright - the 7th and today, the 15th.

The Stars in March's Third Quarter

By the middle of the month, all of winter's stars are clustered together now in the far west just a few hours after dark.

They take the Milky Way with them and completely disappear from view by three o'clock in the morning.

By that time, however, the summer band of the Milky Way appears in the northeastern sky, along with Cygnus, the Northern Cross, and Aquila. In order to see both the winter and summer sides of the Milky Way, you need to be out at midnight; then look along the horizon starting in the east, then turning to the north, then all the way due west

If you scan the horizon an hour or so before sunrise, you will see the wandering stars of Capricorn in the southeast.

In the south, find Sagittarius, and then Scorpius (easily identified by the red star,) Antares, in its center. West of Scorpius, is the boxy Libra.

West of Libra, is Virgo, marked by Spica, the brightest of the western stars.

Natural Calendar

When the mourning cloaks, the question marks, the tortoise shells and the white cabbage butterflies come out, catfish are getting ready to feed in the Little and Great Miami Rivers, and goldfinches are turning gold throughout the Valley.

The great predawn chorus of birds begins near 6:00 a.m. Later in the day, flickers and pileated woodpeckers call. Winged ants will be flying then, and the first green-bottle flies. Garter snakes will lie out sunning.

When butterflies appear, spring picks up speed, the number of new plants increasing every day even though the air is cool.

Hepatica, harbinger of spring, and twinleaf are pushing out. Toad trillium and Dutchman's britches are ready to open.

The foliage of wild geranium, clover, and columbine is growing. September's zigzag goldenrod is two inches long.

Leaves of the golden Alexander are an inch across.

Scarlet cup mushrooms swell in the dark.

All the leaves and fungi and butterflies in the Ohio Valley are signs that sandhill cranes are migrating through the Rocky Mountains.

The road to Savannah is green with leaves a third to half emerged.

Wisteria is fragrant along the Georgia coast, and fields of rice show off their purple blossoms. In Alabama, it's time for redbud trees and pears to bloom.

On the outskirts of New Orleans, winter cress is going to seed, and huge, squat yellow thistles grow beside the roads; in the French Quarter, azaleas and camellias are wide open, and yellow day lilies and the crepe myrtles are flowering.

In the Field and Garden

Start a journal listing the bloom dates for the spring bulbs in your garden or that you see flowering in the neighborhood.

That way, you can tell the future flowering dates (more or less).

Frost-seed the pastures where the ground is still freezing and thawing on a regular basis.

If you have fruit trees, complete your spraying with dormant oil before temperatures get any warmer and buds break dormancy.

Mites, scale, and aphid eggs will mature quickly when the temperatures climb above 60 degrees. The insects will be more easily controlled by dormant oil spray the closer they are to hatching.

Countdown to Spring

• One week until the blooming Middle Spring wildflowers in the woods

• Three weeks until American toads sing their mating songs in the night.

• Four weeks until the Great Dandelion and Violet Bloom begins

• Five weeks until azaleas and snowball viburnums and dogwoods blossom

• Six weeks until iris and poppies and daisies come into flower

• Seven weeks until the beginning of clover bloom in yards and pastures

• Eight weeks until the first orange day lily flowers

• Nine weeks until roses bloom and thistles bud

• Ten weeks until the high tree canopy begins to shade the garden

Journal

Even though average blooming dates of certain spring shrubs have moved back about a week in the past thirty years, the familiar structure of the seasons is not so different than that of the 1980s.

In spite of changes, I continue to enjoy the similarities that continue to appear.

David Jensen's snowdrops bloomed on February 1 in 1988 like those in front of Liz's house in 2012.

Janet Hackett's aconites flowered on February 8, 1991 and on February 11, 1993, at least a week ahead of those in the Stafford Street alley this year.

Probably the most striking changes that the almanack has noted, thanks to many observers who have shared their observations, concern birds.

In the last century, sandhill cranes did not fly over Yellow Springs like they now do every November and December.

Phil Hawkey was the first to report them in 2004, and every year afterwards, village residents have seen or heard them.

When my family and I arrived in Yellow Springs in the 1970s, the appearance of turkey vultures in March or late February was a sign of spring.

Then, just in the past decade, the sightings became earlier and earlier until it was clear the vultures were no longer leaving the area during the late fall; they were spending the winter here.

And in 2004, the first black buzzard (a variety of vulture that rarely ventured north of the Ohio River in the 20th century) was reported in the Glen, and by 2009, small flocks were overwintering in the county, along with their turkey vulture relatives.

In reviewing my journal for this column, I have been reassured to see once again that what has happened before will happen again.

It is comforting to see that each week and even each day has its own agenda for weather, flowers, insects, grass and trees, even as that agenda may be slowly transformed by climate.

As I piece together my own life, I realize that its fragments accumulate around natural history, threads of excitement, disappointment, idealism and love weaving in and around snowstorms and starlight, robins, anemones and lilacs, shifting

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(Continued From Page 2)

too in a kind of precession of equinoxes around the sun.

ALMANACK LITERATURE
The Precious Knife
By Lois Kilgore, Plymouth, OH

This is a true story about my nephew, James, when he was about eight or nine years old.

My sister, Ruth, and her family of seven children (of which James was the second kid) lived in Knott County, Kentucky.

I went down to visit them for a week. They had an outhouse in the back.

We were sitting and talking in the kitchen, snapping green beans for supper.

Then we heard one of the children screaming, "Help me, please!"

Help me, please!"

We ran outside to see what was happening.

Well, we tracked the sound to the outhouse and found James down in it. He'd fallen in and couldn't get back out.

We got him out and asked, "What in the world were you doing down there?"

He said that he dropped his knife that his grandpa had given to him, and that no one was ever going to get that knife, not even the outhouse.

We laughed until we couldn't laugh any more.

I think about that every time I think of him. He got killed in 1992, and we put his knife with him.

Follow the month of April in Bill Felker's Daytook for the Year, available from Amazon.

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Jonah
Words of Inspiration
By Pastor John David Thacker

It amazes me that the worst prophet in the Bible was arguably the most successful.

And Jonah was a terrible prophet! God told him to go to Nineveh and prophesy.

Jonah said, "Hold that thought," slipped out the back door, and ran as far as he could in the opposite direction.

When he reached the shores of the Mediterranean Sea, he hopped on a ship and kept going.

His destination was Tarshish.

We don't know where Tarshish was, except that it was far, far away over the sea—as far away as Jonah could get from Nineveh.

And from God. ...Or so he thought.

After being thrown overboard, swallowed by a fish, taken back to Israel, and vomited onto the beach, Jonah gives up and begins trudging overland toward Nineveh.

When he arrives at that great city, he stalks the streets shouting, "Forty days more, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!"

Jonah doesn't tell the Ninevites what they've done wrong or how to avoid judgment.

He doesn't call them to repentance or give them any hope.

He merely pronounces doom and then leaves.

He makes camp outside the city and waits for the fireworks to start.

He wants a front-row seat for Nineveh's destruction.

But something truly amazing happens.

Although Jonah prophesied begrudgingly and half-heartedly, like a surly teenager doing chores against his will, ("I'll wash these dishes, but they are not going to be clean!") the Ninevites listen to him and repent!

The king and all the people—the entire city, even the animals—fast and pray and ask God for forgiveness. And God forgives them.

If Isaiah or Jeremiah had such an overwhelmingly favorable response to their messages, they would have

been ecstatic.

But not Jonah. Jonah is furious.

He lashes out at God, complaining, "This is why I fled to Tarshish at the beginning; for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and ready to relent from punishing."

Coming from another prophet, those would be words of gratitude and praise.

But from Jonah's lips, they are a bitter accusation: "You are too soft, God!"

Jonah did not want Nineveh to repent.

He wanted to watch Nineveh burn.

But why?

Because Nineveh was the capital of the Assyrian Empire.

And Assyria was the enemy of Israel.

Jonah didn't want God to be merciful to his enemy.

Like most of us, Jonah wanted God to be merciful to him and compassionate to his people, but strict and vengeful with his opponents.

This story is a powerful reminder that God loves all people, not just the ones we love.

All those who confess their sin and call upon God will be heard.

This was a bitter pill for Jonah to swallow.

I don't know if he, the messenger, ever got the message himself.

The story ends on a poignant, unanswered question.

God asks Jonah, "Should I not be concerned about Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand persons who do not know their right hand from their left, and also many animals?"

What is our answer to God's question?

Do we approve of God's mercy, even for our enemies?

Will we love as God loves?

Will we forgive?

Or will we run away?



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Worship Service ~ 9:30 am
Sunday School ~ 10:45 am
Everyone Welcome

Farm and Field Report

Help us Shape the Future

Submitted by OSU Extension Office

The C-FARM (<https://carbon.osu.edu/c-farm>) research team is farmers, land-owners, or other decision-makers managing cropland or farmland to participate in a comprehensive survey focused on carbon markets.

Your responses will help researchers understand the challenges, questions, and information gaps that influence participation in agricultural carbon programs, ultimately guiding future outreach and extension efforts.

How to Participate:

Completing this Qualtrics survey will take 10-12 minutes. Ohio Farmers can complete the survey online by October 31, 2026.

Completing the survey constitutes your consent to

participate in the study.

As a token of appreciation for your time, Ohio Farmers who complete the survey will receive a \$10 virtual gift card.

Please remember to include your full name and email address at the end of the survey so we can send the gift card.

Link to access survey: https://osu.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_4Iuy6pldfEotUwu

QR for survey:



Inquiries with questions about the survey or its use should be directed to Michael Estadt, estadt.3@osu.edu, Prasanna Oruganti, oruganti.11@osu.edu, Elizabeth Hawkins, hawkins.301@osu.edu, Asmita Murumkar, murumkar.1@osu.edu

Funding source: This Project is funded by "The Foundation for Food and Agriculture Research (FFAR)."

Principle Investigator(s): Michael Estadt, Prasanna Oruganti, Dr. Elizabeth Hawkins, Dr. Asmita Murumkar.

Crop Observation and Recommendation Network

C.O.R.N. Newsletter is a summary of crop observations, related information, and appropriate recommendations for Ohio crop producers and industry.

C.O.R.N. Newsletter is produced by the Ohio

What is Carbon Cycle?

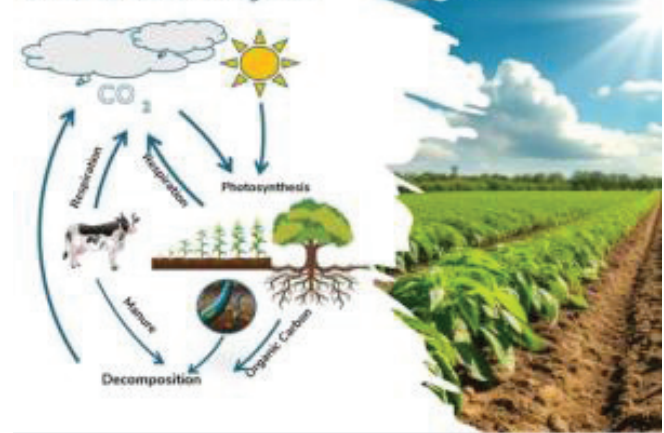


Figure 1: Explains what the Agricultural Carbon Cycle is (Created by Fariba Babaeian and Asmita Murumkar)

State University Extension Agronomy Team, state specialists at The Ohio State University and the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center (OARDC). C.O.R.N. Newsletter questions are directed

to Extension and OARDC state specialists and associates at Ohio State.

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OFFICE OF PUBLICATION
104 Depot Street, Archbold, Ohio 43502
(ISSN 0093-5832)
PUBLISHED TUESDAYS
Periodicals Postage Paid At
Archbold, Ohio 43502
Postmaster: Send address changes to:
Farmland News, PO Box 240
Archbold, Ohio 43502-0240

SUBSCRIPTION PRICE:
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Conversations With My Wife

Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow

by Ron Bliss

There is an old joke that I heard long ago and recently it appeared on the internet.

A husband was reading the newspaper, and he told his wife that an article he was reading stated that women talked twice as much as men.

It said that men speak about fifteen thousand words a day and women say about thirty thousand.

She laid down her magazine and said, "That is because everything I say to you, I have to repeat".

Well, it is not that way in our house.

I am very hard of hearing, therefore my wife has to say three or four times as many words a day as I do. .

I'm on my second pair of hearing aids and they certainly are not perfect.

We might be sitting, watching television and she will say something, and I will say, "what".

She will repeat it and again, I say, "what".

Finally, I turn the television down and for the third time say, "What".

I look her straight in the face so I can read her lips and listen with intent...at last I understand.

Often when we are watching TV I won't hear what's being said.

I'll have to ask my wife and by the time I understand what she said we've missed three minutes of the broadcast.

I wore glasses until I was in my fifties.

I had corrective surgery on my eyes and it gave me 20/20 vision.

While at 88 years old, it is probably not quite that good now but it's still very good.

My wife lost vision in her right eye when she was a child, and she has had problems with her left eye.

Her hearing is excellent. I tell her I am her eyes and she is my ears.

I have ear noises to contend with due to my reduced ability to hear clearly and I hear what sounds like a motor running all the time.

Additionally, I have neuropathy in my legs and quite often I get body vibrations because of this.

It would have been comical for you to see me one evening in our house as I could feel vibrations and the sound of a motor running in my ear.

I told my wife, "something is running" - I hear it and I feel it.

I'm chasing around the house looking for something that did not exist.

As lovable and sweet as she is, she is not perfect either.

She occasionally misplaces things, mostly, her cell phone or reading glasses.

On one occasion we looked high and low for something she had misplaced.

I don't recall what it was,

but when we finally found it... in the refrigerator.

Not a likely place for it.

The best one was her cell phone.

This is how the conversation went.

"Have you seen my cell phone?"

"No, where did you have it last?"

"I don't remember but I can't find it anywhere."

"Did you check the car."

"Yes, it's not there."

"Well, let's dial it and see if we can follow the sound."

"Ring, ring, ring, ring, ring."

Wow!

"Sounds like it is coming from the garage."

"I'll bet I left it in the car, but I did look there."

"Well, it isn't in the car, let's check the trunk."

"No, not there either."

Dial again.

Ring, ring, ring.

It seems to be coming from over here.

I lift the lid on the garbage can and dig deep.

Ah, here it is, in with the garbage.

Conversations around our house can become a bit comical at times.

It didn't used to be this way but since we have gotten older it seems to have happened naturally.

As I have aged, my mind has become a bit befuddled.

My wife is much better than I am.

Oh, she is not perfect by any means but just better than me.

I make it to Walmart about three times a week.

Since I eat a banana and an orange every day for breakfast I must go frequently as I don't like bananas when they are too ripe.

She does but not me.

Recently I told her I was going to Walmart.

Sometimes I go just to get out of the house for a while.

At my age it is like a mini

vacation.

She asked what I needed and I said bananas.

She told me to pick up a gallon of milk while I was at it.

I spent a little over an hour in the store.

I came home with bananas, two different kinds of cookies, cat food for the feral cats, two items from the clearance aisle, some potato salad, ice cream, a shirt I didn't need but was on sale, and some vitamin C drops that I eat like candy.

She said, "Where is the milk"?

I told her I knew there was something I had forgotten.

She said, "you only went after bananas and milk".

"Well, I'll go back," I told her.

"Let it go, we have enough until tomorrow."

You might be thinking she was unkind in her words.

She was not.

My wife is one of the sweetest people you could ever meet.

We have been married over 66 years and we do not argue.

Never have.

Periodically I will go to the bank and draw out a

few hundred dollars from our checking account, so I have spending money in my wallet.

A few months ago, I did just that.

I drew out three hundred dollars.

The teller asked me if I needed an envelope.

I said no and folded it up and placed it in my front pocket.

That was the last time I saw the money.

I must have pulled something from my pocket and the money fell to the ground.

If you are still young, pay attention.

These are life lessons for you, so you do not repeat them in your old age.

By now you probably have the impression that we are a bit strange.

Not at all.

We are just your average Great Grandma and Great Grandpa.

They are just like us.

They just don't confide in you the way we have.

Ron was born in McClure, Ohio, raised in Napoleon and has lived in Wauseon for the past 64 years.

A Navy veteran, he worked in Quality Control at Campbell Soup Company for almost 37 years. He's been writing poems since he was in school and has self-published 21 books of poetry. FN

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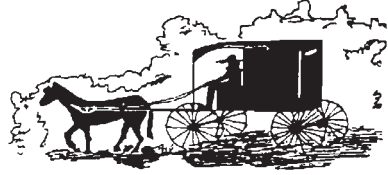
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The Amish Cook

by Gloria Yoder



Heavy Hearts

We walked in the quiet of the morning.

It was a tad before 5:00 a.m. No one seemed to mind the early morning exertion.

At the corner of the country gravel road we met several neighbors who were also waiting on a bus ride to the wedding in Kentucky, where Abby, one of our girls from church, would be married that day.

The children were excited as we climbed onto the bus and found seats.

I was too – nonetheless there was also a sense of sadness at the thought of having an empty seat beside me.

Not empty in the sense of no one sitting there, as I'm surrounded with children, but lonesome in the thought of the passing of Daniel.

But it was okay. I've found that I can get swallowed up worrying about not fitting in with the girls, or not being like other families.

But the other mindset works much better – I find joy in being with the girls, after all, they're not married either!

With that I also find comfort in spending time with other couples, after all, was not that the life I still cherish?

So on the bus I found myself situated between the couples and the girls – and best of all, my Savior, who stayed with me the duration of the trip.

In less than three hours

we arrived at the community center, where a group of us got off to help with morning preparations for feeding the 500 guests.

The others headed on to the church building where services had begun.

A few hours later when we arrived where the ceremony would be performed, the last stanzas of a German song were being sung.

We filed in and took our seats among the many others.

The next hour and a half were spent listening to messages, mostly on marriage.

The young couple was encouraged to keep walking with the Lord as they stepped into marriage and all that He has for them.

It was touching to see their hands joined in marriage, knowing that this lifelong commitment was not meant to be all easy, yet with Christ, there would be untold blessings.

Though my husband is no longer at my side, I still take delight in seeing other marriages flourish together after years of weathering and intensity.

It's a beautiful picture of the love Jesus, as the groom, has for us as His bride – no matter the cost, we stay true to Him and He to us.

The table waiter, cooks, coffee servers, and other helpers all hopped onto three buses to be shuttled over to the community center.

Upon our arrival we ate lunch before tackling our noon tasks.

Candles were lit across

Recipe Of The Week

Cheesy Taco Pasta

- 1-lb. ground beef
- 1 packet taco seasoning
- 1-1/2 cups salsa
- 1/3 cup water
- 2 cups shredded Taco Blend Cheese
- 8-oz. rotini pasta

In a skillet over medium high heat, brown the ground beef completely. Drain off the excess grease. While the meat is cooking, boil the pasta until tender; drain. Add the water and taco seasoning to the ground beef, saute for several minutes. Mix the pasta, salsa and 1-1/2 cups of the cheese in with the meat mixture until well blended. Sprinkle the remaining cheese over the top of the mixture and serve. Makes 4 servings. Enjoy!

This Recipe of the Week is from Sandra Berk, Lyons, Ohio

the tables, and finishing touches on the food.

Mashed potatoes, gravy, grilled chicken, buttered noodles, wedding salad, herb bread, brownie fruit pizza, and Snickers tapioca was on the menu.

When the guests began filing into the reception the 70 helpers lined up to sing.

It looked pretty, most of the girls wore gray or blush with white aprons, the guys stood along the back with white and black shirts.

One song especially blessed my heart which was a favorite of my uncle's family as they walked the cancer journey together.

Aren't those words so true for any stage of life? "God is still good"!

The weather was perfect with gentle sunshine and slight breeze.

By mid afternoon most of the guests had cleared out while some of us hung around to help with kitchen work and chat with friends.

A highlight for me was meeting extended family from both the bride and groom.

The groom's mother is a widow, thus holds a special place in my heart.

Now on the front porch of the community center I took a seat beside this elderly lady and introduced myself.

I was quite surprised to learn that she is the mother of my widow friend.

Gentleness and kindness

seeped through her entire demeanor.

More ladies gathered around.

We listened with keen interest as she told stories of long ago days.

It was evident that she had many years of experience in life; it is those people that make me want to just sit and listen for hours.

Haven't they gleaned much in life that we can learn from?

By 5:00 it was supper time and a new set of guests were ushered in.

I gathered the children, we headed for the table to be served.

Again the reality of being alone swept over me.

I thought of the many widows out there, I thought of those who were never married, and those who were married and wished they weren't.

At the end of the day it is the reality in everyone's personal life that we're all faced with.

Yes, tears are not bad, in fact they are important.

What we do with them is perhaps, just as important.

Will they make us or break us?

After a light supper of hot ham and cheese sandwiches, mac and cheese, leftover salad, cupcakes, and ice cream cups, we eagerly listened to an inspiration shared by the bride's uncle.

After filing through and greeting the couple and the

parents, we all headed for the bus, ready for the ride home.

Abby we'll miss you, now that you moved to KY to be with your new husband, nonetheless we wish you God's touch each step of the journey!

Try this delicious broccoli salad that was served at the wedding!

Wedding Broccoli Salad

- 1 head broccoli chopped
- 1 head cauliflower chopped
- 1 cup mayonnaise
- 1 cup sour cream
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 pound bacon fried and crumbled
- 1 cup Cheddar cheese shredded

Combine the chopped broccoli and cauliflower in a large bowl.

In a separate bowl, combine the mayonnaise, sour cream, sugar, and salt to make a creamy dressing.

Add the dressing to the broccoli-cauliflower mix, stirring to evenly coat the vegetables.

Stir in the bacon and the cheese, reserving a small amount to sprinkle on top of the salad just before serving.

Readers may write Gloria with culinary or cultural questions at: Gloria Yoder, 10510 E. 350th Avenue, Flat Rock, IL 62427. FN

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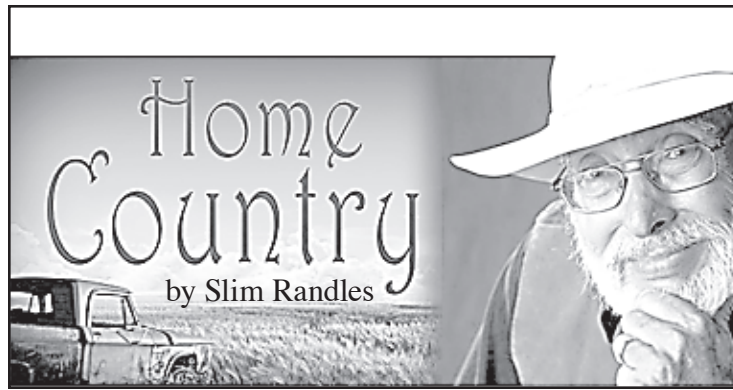
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AGRICULTURE



When old Joe Gilliam began digging that hole in his front yard, out there close to the street, neighbors watched and wondered.

When he got his grandson to help him carry the shade tree sapling from his pickup to the hole, people nodded. Mystery solved. Old Joe's planting a tree.

After removing the root mass from the five-gallon pot, the grandson disappeared and Old Joe was left to care for the baby tree.

He carefully spread the tiny feeder roots out and tucked them in with soil. Then he packed more dirt around the tree's base and soaked it well with the

hose.

No one else saw anything odd in Joe planting that tree, either, but Joe's been retired now going on 20 years.

He's old and getting more frail each year.

By the time that sapling gets large enough to give homes to squirrels and birds and shade to neighbors and a resting place for dogs, Joe will have been long gone.

Planting a tree is an affirmation of faith in the future.

It is a gift to those yet unborn.

It is a legacy of goodness, an old man's prayer.

Brought to you by "Strange Tales of Alaska" by Slim Randles. Now available online. FN

Blast From The Past... Farmland News 1964

Welcome to our Blast from the Past... a new column featuring a glimpse of vintage Farmland News articles.

We would love your feedback and hope you enjoy this new column.



Chickens For Outer Space

Meanwhile, back at Cape Kennedy, scientists are reported to be studying the possibility of sending eggs to orbit to see whether chickens embryos will develop normally in space. The chicken embryo is considered well suited for this test since it has been studied thoroughly on earth, has a 21-day development period suited to short space missions, and because it is known that gravity has some effect on it, since eggs must be turned in order to hatch.

Just one small problem that must be overcome. How to transport the eggs in space, so that they will survive the stresses of a co-rotation, re-entry and landing without scrambling, seems to be the main problem.

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Northwest State
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Maddie Lutts displaying her artwork.



Brett Light busy painting.

CREATIVITY

(Continued From Page 1)

creativity but also gain confidence and independence.

Walking into the studio one observes a vibrant environment filled with color and movement.

Artwork from a wide variety of artists is displayed throughout the building, with pieces regularly rotated to highlight new creations.

The atmosphere is welcoming and energetic with artists greeting one another

warmly, while working on projects that range from paintings and ceramics, to jewelry and mixed-media designs.

What is the Soaring Arts?

According to studio coordinator Tonya Wagner, the program operates as a day program connected to Filling Homes and serves individuals from several counties in the region.

Participants who come to the studio create artwork that can be sold later on

commission.

This allows the artist to gain real-world experience in the creative marketplace.

While art is at the center of the program, the studio's mission extends far beyond producing paintings or pottery.

The program focuses on preparing individuals for employment and active participation in their communities.

Artists take part in many of the responsibilities involved in running the studio and learning practical skills that mirror those used in professional workplaces.

Participants assist with tasks such as:

- Cleaning and organizing the workspace
- Managing inventory
- Maintaining the studio's website
- Interacting with customers who visit the gallery.

Some artists help teach community classes, guiding visitors through art projects and explaining creative techniques.

By combining artistic practice with practical responsibilities, the program helps artists develop both creative and professional abilities.

History and Challenges



The artists who painted this mural.

The studio has grown significantly since its early years.

When Soaring Arts first opened, it began as a smaller program with fewer artists and limited space.

Over the years however, the organization has expanded as interest in the program grew and community support increased.

The studio today serves a wide range of artists and regularly hosts events that bring residents into the creative process.

This growth has helped the program establish itself as an important cultural and educational resource within the community.

The name "Soaring Arts" also has a creative origin connected directly to the artists as they worked together to design possible logos for the studio.

One design featuring a bird, stood out among the others, eventually becoming the studio's official symbol.

(Continued on Page 9)



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Aric Gurzynski doing pottery.

CREATIVITY

(Continued From Page 8)

From that image, the name “Soaring Arts” emerged, reflecting the idea of creativity taking flight.

While the studio provides a supportive and inspiring environment, the artists themselves often face personal challenges.

Some participants deal with mobility limitations, while others struggle with fears, uncertainty, or nervousness when trying new experiences.

Despite these obstacles, the program encourages artists to push beyond their comfort zone and explore new opportunities.

Over time many of them develop the skills and confidence they once believed were out of their reach.

For example, some of the artists who initially felt too nervous to speak in front of groups have grown comfortable enough to lead community workshops and teach art classes.

Through encouragement and practice they’ve discovered new strengths and talents, while helping others learn creative techniques.

The Scope of Art

Community support has definitely played a role in the success of Soaring Arts.

Studio Coordinator Tonya shared that the Napoleon

community has consistently shown strong support for the program and the artists who participate in it.

Local residents, organizations, and businesses often attend events, purchase artwork, or donate supplies.

Over the years, public understanding of the program has also grown.

Rather than focusing on disabilities, many community members now focus on the creativity and artistic ability displayed in the studio’s work.

This shift has helped increase appreciation for the artists and their contributions to the local arts scene.

One of the unique aspects of the studio is its commitment to encouraging individual interests, rather than limiting artists to a set curriculum or specific medium.

The program encourages experimentation and personal exploration.

Artists are free to work with a wide range of materials and techniques depending on their interests, some focus on painting or drawing, while others develop skills in pottery, ceramics, or jewelry-making.

Occasionally, artists even propose unusual or experimental ideas, and the studio works to find ways to support those creative pursuits.

In some cases, artists discover passions that evolve into small creative businesses.

One participant developed a strong interest in pottery and began producing ceramic pieces that can be sold through the studio.

The flexible and individualized approach to learning is one way Soaring Arts



Nancy Darr loves to paint.



Tony Conti is excited about his artwork.

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differs from traditional art education programs that follow structured lesson plans and time lines.

The studio focuses on adapting to each artist’s pace and interests.

Some artists complete projects quickly, moving on to new ideas within days, while others spend months or even years perfecting a single piece.

The program emphasizes that every creative journey is unique and the value of

art lies in the process as much as the final product.

Rather than strict schedules or rigid project assignments, the space operates as an open studio where artists work independently while sharing ideas and encouragement with one another.

Artists often inspire each other by sharing techniques, offering suggestions, or simply observing one another’s work, with artists

(Continued on Page 10)



Dakota Robinson teaching a student.



Noela Knepper is proud of her pottery.



Emilee Schwiebert's fashion show.

CREATIVITY (Continued From Page 9)

frequently celebrating each other's accomplishments.

In addition to creative expression, art can also provide financial opportunities for participants.

Some artists attend the studio a few days a week as a way to relax and explore creativity outside of other jobs, for others, art becomes a primary focus and potential source of income.

Participants learn how to price their work, interact with buyers, and manage aspects of the sales process.

The community support and help with funding is much appreciated.

Donations of art supplies help keep the studio stocked with materials, while state funding assists with operational costs.

This support allows the studio to continue offering programs and opportunities for artists ranging from young adults to individuals in their 60s, this diversity creates a dynamic environment where people from different backgrounds and various life experiences can be creative and work together.

While the main focus is on adult artists, occasionally the studio offers classes for children and families in the community.

One of the most popular ways the studio connects with the community is through its monthly art classes.

These workshops invite residents to join the artists in

creating projects that range from seasonal decorations to unique artistic pieces.

During the winter season, the studio hosted a snowman-themed pottery class that brought community members together to create ceramic figures.

Workshops like these typically attract between 10 and 20 participants.

Some attendees return month after month, forming connections with the artists and becoming regular supporters of the studio's programs.

Occasionally, community classes and workshops are held at the studio, however they can also take place at other locations around Napoleon, such as: the local senior center, The Lumberyard Winery and other places.

During these events, the artists often take on teaching roles, demonstrating techniques, explaining the creative process, along with assisting participants as they work on their projects.

Creating a Culture

In many competitive en-

vironments, artists may feel pressure to outperform one another, however at Soaring Arts the focus is on encouragement and collaboration.

This supportive atmosphere helps foster confidence and a sense of belonging among participants.

Each year, the studio also introduces themes designed to encourage exploration and growth in different areas of art.

In 2025, the studio's theme encouraged artists to think creatively beyond traditional painting on canvas.

Participants experimented with a variety of unusual materials and techniques, including paper mâché sculptures, decorated mannequin dresses, and projects inspired by live music.

The current theme encourages artists to explore artistic ideas more deeply by studying art history, visiting museums, and learning about different artistic movements from various time periods.

Recently, the studio focused on exploring abstract

(Continued on Page 11)

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Jen Nofziger's pottery business.

CREATIVITY

(Continued From Page 10)

art while also encouraging participants to experiment with different mediums.

The program recognizes that creativity extends beyond visual art.

Some participants enjoy writing stories or poetry, and the studio encourages those forms of artistic expression as well.

By embracing multiple forms of creativity, Soaring Arts ensures that each participant can find a meaningful outlet for their talents.

Despite the variety of activities and projects taking place, there is rarely a typical day at the studio.

The open format allows artists to come and go as needed, working on projects whenever they are able to attend.

At any given time, several artists may be painting, sculpting, or experimenting with new ideas.

Conversations and laughter fill the room as participants share progress on their work and encourage one another.

Conclusion

The energy of the studio reflects the passion and dedication of the artists who spend their days there.

The studio personnel believe that one of the most important lessons the program teaches is that creativity doesn't require perfection.

Instead, artists are encouraged to find a new approach to challenges along with discovering alternative ways to express their ideas.

By focusing on possibility rather than limitation, the studio helps artists build confidence in their abilities and recognize the value of their contributions.

The environment created by the artists themselves has become one of the studio's most defining characteristics.

Visitors who enter the space often notice the warmth and positivity shared among participants.

For many artists, the studio represents a place where they feel accepted, supported, and inspired to explore their talents.

As Soaring Arts continues to grow, it remains dedicated to its mission of empowering artists and strengthening connections within the community.

Farmland News would like to thank Soaring Arts Studio for sharing their story.

Molly Huddle is a student at Napoleon High School and is interested in journalism. She writes for the school newspaper, The Wildcat Roar. FN

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