

Mountain Park NEWS

Autumn 2016 • Vol. 17 Num. 4

The Circle Time Parade of Changes

I am walking through a vanilla forest. A sunny, humid morning after a couple of rainy days has filled the air, and my nostrils, with the natural sweet aroma of the ponderosa pines. There is also a hint of coolness in the breeze that is tugging on the warmth of the sunshine, most welcome after the hot and dry summer that is winding down. I am glad I brought along a jacket.

Everything about the landscape through which the trail climbs tells me that the change of the seasons will soon see this summer slip into fall. Apparently Earth is still revolving around the sun. It's been a pretty dismal summer for wildflowers due to the lack of rain. The few flowers that are in bloom – stiff goldenrod, hairy golden aster, Kansas gayflower, Porter aster, smooth aster (all members of the Sunflower Family, typical of late summer) – are right on schedule to welcome in the fall season. The pink and white kinnikinnick flowers of last spring have all become crimson berries about the size of a large pea. They will turn brown as the fall takes hold, unless the bears get to them first (kinnikinnick is also called bearberry, since bears purportedly like to eat them).

There is no birdsong to fill the vanilla air, as breeding season for the park's feathered travelers is over for 2016. Yet, for a late morning in late summer, the birds seem especially active and vocal. Steller's jays, mountain chickadees, spotted towhees, western wood peewees, and several others that I can't quite identify are filling the cool



"I CAN SMELL AUTUMN DANCING IN THE BREEZE.
THE SWEET CHILL OF PUMPKIN AND CRISP
SUNBURNT LEAVES." ~ ANN DRAKE



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MPEC's Mission is to provide
environmental education for the
community in order to create
a citizenry that understands,
respects, enjoys, and cares for
themselves, their families, their
community and the natural world.

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air with their calls and squawks.

I am pleased, and a bit surprised
considering how dry it's been, to see
the oaks carrying a fairly healthy
crop of acorns. Acorns are rich in
carbohydrates, protein and fat; hence,
they are an important fall food for wild
turkeys, squirrels, chipmunks, bear,
and deer. Some recent new residents
of the park, acorn woodpeckers, are
so fond of acorns that they store
them in small holes that they drill
into trees. The large pine snag that
is just west of the parking lot at the
Horseshoe Lodge is a favorite tree
of these clown-like birds (I just
walked by that tree a little while
ago and, sure enough, I heard the
acorn woodpecker's distinctive
call). Since being spotted during a Guided Birding Hike that

I led a few years ago, a small population has established itself in the park, an indication that acorn woodpeckers are moving north from New Mexico as the climate warms.

As I hike out of the pines and into a rocky open section of the trail, I see that the mountain mahogany is also carrying a good seed crop. Many birds and small mammals eat the nutritious seeds, conspicuous due to their white, feathery, spiral attachments that seem to cover the branches of this small shrub.

Yes, all of this is the land saying loud and clear – fall is on its way!

Hmm, a raindrop. And another. And another. The sunshine has given way to clouds, which are now beginning to shed some rain. It looks like there will be at least three consecutive days of rain as August nears its final days. Maybe this dry summer will go out on a wet note. Maybe it will be a wet fall – rain to start, and some nice, wet snow too. And maybe the land will be a winter wonderland as the Earth continues its revolution around the sun, making for ideal snowy conditions in the park for lots of snowshoeing and cross-country skiing!

But I am getting ahead of myself. I plan on thoroughly enjoying this change from summer to fall – warm, gentle days, chilly nights, sweater mornings – the season when the land puts on its earthy fall colors. I recall a verse from an old Phil Ochs song I used to play: "Green leaves of summer turn red in the fall, to brown and to yellow they fade. And then they have to die, trapped within the circle time parade of changes." Singing this lovely melody in my head only adds to the vanilla sweetness of my morning hike.

~ Dave Van Manen

August 25, 2016



"...I CANNOT ENDURE TO WASTE ANYTHING SO PRECIOUS AS
AUTUMNAL SUNSHINE BY STAYING IN THE HOUSE. SO I HAVE
SPENT ALMOST ALL THE DAYLIGHT HOURS IN THE OPEN AIR."

~ NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE

Many thanks to those who donated to MPEC through new or renewed memberships, grants, memorials, or other donations: Charles & Georgine Booms, Maria Westy Bush, Jeff Chostner, Annabelle Corboy, Gay Davis Miller, Maura Edison, Diane Mueller & Glenn Runkewich, Marjorie Genova, Cyndi Hart, Doris Kester, Chad Logan, Sally Mara, Daniel Masterson, Lee Miller, Brandi Moore, Frank & Julie Nemick, Naoma O'Neill, Alan and Julie Pitts, Harry & Patricia Rurup, Deanna Sanders, Sisters of Mercy, Mike & Sandy Spahr, Judy Staples, United Way of Pueblo, Dave Van Manen, Irene Verstraete, & John Zondlo.

Pueblo's Best Idea

By Jon Pilarski, Executive Director

"National parks are the best idea we ever had. Absolutely American, absolutely democratic, they reflect us at our best rather than our worst." ~ Wallace Stegner

The National Park Service celebrated its 100th birthday on August 25. In 1916, Congress passed the National Park Service Organic Act and thus combined the existing 14 National Parks into one organization, the National Park Service. This Act ensured the permanence of what many have called "America's best idea."

It wasn't long after Congress' action that the City of Pueblo followed up with what I am calling "Pueblo's best idea." The City of Pueblo purchased the land for Pueblo Mountain Park in 1920 at a time when Pueblo steelworkers retreated to the mountains of Beulah for picnics, camping, and outdoor recreation. For the past 96 years our park has played host to adventures, relaxation, family bonding, and a multitude of memories.

A recent article in High Country News titled "The Park Service's befuddling funding" highlighted that the National Park Service saw its annual appropriations decline 8 percent between 2005 and 2014. Funding cuts have resulted in a backlog of more than \$11.9 billion in deferred maintenance. The deferred maintenance has made dilapidated roads and bridges, campgrounds in disrepair, and overgrown trails a common sight in our national parks. In response, the Park Service has turned to outside gifts to support their base budgets. Individual, foundation, and corporate donations are taking on an expanded role in park funding, and park budgets have become increasingly dependent on entrance and recreation fees.

A similar pattern can be seen at Pueblo Mountain Park. In 2008, City of Pueblo officials, perhaps recognizing the challenges of maintaining a 611 acre mountain park during challenging economic times, turned to Mountain Park Environmental Center (MPEC), a small non-profit organization, to take over management of the park.

Eight years later, we continue to receive funding and assistance from the City each year, but like the National Park Service, we too are recognizing the growing need to reach out to donors in order to meet our annual budgets. We



count on individual donations to continue our important wildfire mitigation work throughout the park. We rely on memberships to help us maintain our trails and restrooms. We use proceeds from overnight stays and pavilion rentals to ensure we have classrooms to hold our educational programs.

And as you visit Pueblo Mountain Park, much like in the National Parks, you will find our backlog of deferred maintenance as well. You will encounter potholes on our roads, and you will see aging picnic areas and old playground equipment. But amidst our aging infrastructure, you will also see the positive impact private donations have made on our park, the highlight of which is the \$1.7 million renovation of the Horseshoe Lodge that turned a 70 year old building from disuse and disrepair into a lodge and retreat center that now hosts overnight guests, youth groups, corporate retreats, community events, and educational classes 365 days a year.

Each year we chip away at our backlog of deferred maintenance. In the coming months, you will see new picnic tables and grills in many of our picnic sites as a result of a grant from the Frank Lamb Foundation. You will see masons repairing the rockwork on our bridges as a result of a grant from the Bob and Doris Johnston Foundation.

I am always amazed to think that I am managing a park that is over 96 years old. I am astounded to think that that park resides in the valley that is the birthplace of "car camping" and using public lands for outdoor recreation. As we reflect on the 96 year history of Pueblo Mountain Park, I want to thank all of you, our donors and supporters, for helping to make our park a success. And while we no doubt will find funding challenges down the road, I am confident in saying that we will work together to make sure that 96 years from now, Pueblo Mountain Park will still be able to be called "Pueblo's Best Idea." 🌲



MPEC now has an on-line donor page at our website. You can easily and securely renew your membership or make a donation using your credit card at our new web link. Just go to www.hikeandlearn.org click on **Help MPEC Grow**. Thanks!

Where's Ranger Dave?

By Ranger Dave

"YOU DIDN'T
COME INTO THIS
WORLD. YOU
CAME OUT OF
IT, LIKE A WAVE
FROM THE
OCEAN. YOU ARE
NOT A STRANGER
HERE."
~ ALAN WATTS

It seems there are a lot of folks who are asking or wondering about what I am up to these days, now that I am no longer MPEC's Executive Director. So, to clear a few things up: First, I am not retired. I am still very much a working man, and I still work for MPEC.

After many years of starting, building and directing MPEC, of being responsible for the countless details of running this non-profit, I decided not too long ago that it was time for me to pass the baton of being MPEC's Executive Director to someone else. I am most happy to tell you that the very capable Jon Pilarski (JP), an Indiana transplant with many years experience working for the Indianapolis Zoo, is now at MPEC's helm.

In my new role as MPEC's Special Projects Coordinator, I get to work closely with Jon as he learns the ins and

more comfortable being outside, sitting on the ground, and lying on the forest floor watching the clouds drift by. I witnessed how they would learn bird songs, yoga poses, song lyrics, and sign language. What if we could work with many more little ones, I would think, and see them more often for a longer stretch each time? Well, we are soon going to find out.

It takes a lot of time to develop an idea such as this – time to connect with others who have a similar vision, time to create a structure in which the vision can grow, time to think and scheme and think some more about this and that detail, time to convince others of the program's value, time to raise the funding...all things I never had the time to do. But now, with JP running MPEC, I am thrilled that I have had the time over the past several months to turn this vision into a reality.

Read about how this idea has become MPEC's Forest School for Little Rangers program in the Preschool Without Walls article in this newsletter.

I remain involved in many other facets of MPEC, including grant writing and fund-raising, trail work and other projects, and program facilitation, including guiding hikes and facilitating the Nature Toddlers program. This new position has also opened up the space and time in my life to be more involved with my grandkids, who live in Colorado Springs. And, I am working with my wife, Helene Van Manen, in developing our Mountain

Coaching and Consulting LLC business.

Lastly, this new arrangement will give me the time to dream up other MPEC projects, along with the time to figure out how to bring them into reality. Although my former MPEC office has become JP's office and I am working out of my home office, which is as close to MPEC as a raven could fly in three wing beats, I am still in the park most days. And I can still be reached at mpec@hikeandlearn.org. 🐾



outs of running this amazing organization and takes MPEC into its future. And I now have the time, finally, to work on MPEC projects that I've wanted to work on for many years, but simply did not have the time while running MPEC.

For example, for many years I wanted to develop a more comprehensive program based on the Nature Toddlers program that I've been facilitating for the past decade. I watched how the little ones that regularly participated in the once-a-month, hour-long toddlers program became

Preschool Without Walls

By Dave Van Manen

Call it a movement. Call it a revolution. Call it a return to sanity. Whatever you call it, a push for young children to spend much of their time outdoors is happening in the field of early childhood education. This movement has come up with terms like Nature Kindergarten, Outdoor Nursery, Waldkindergarten, and Forest School that capture the essence of the concept. This idea is not necessarily new - I suspect that the Amish, Native Americans, and other cultures who spend much of their time outdoors would wonder what all the fuss is about. Kids outside? Well, of course!

The more modern manifestation of Forest Schools started in northern Europe, where young children spend most, if not all, of their time outdoors. A few popped up here in the States in the 1960s, but the idea only began to pick up steam in the United States over the past 15 years or so. Fiddleheads Forest School in Washington, Drumlin Farm Community Preschool in Massachusetts, Mother Earth School in Oregon, and Berkeley Forest School in California are some of the growing list of Forest Schools operating in the US. They come in all sorts of shapes and sizes with different ways of operating, but they all have one thing in common - getting young children out in Nature.

I am most pleased to say that Forest School for Little Rangers can be added to this list. While some Forest Schools see the same children each day, Forest School for Little Rangers (FSLR) is a new MPEC program that is designed to serve over 400 4-year olds that attend the Colorado Preschool Program through Pueblo City Schools. The Colorado Preschool Program accepts children who have been identified as facing educational challenges due to family, economic, or developmental concerns (often referred to as Adverse Childhood Experiences, or ACEs).

FSLR will provide these youngsters with numerous opportunities to experience the wonders of Nature and the countless benefits to their physical and mental development that spending time in Nature provides. FSLR also has a parent education component. In collaboration with parent educators from Catholic Charities and Health Solutions, parents (or grandparents/ guardians) will spend a portion of each day learning practical parenting tools and techniques that build healthy parent-child relationships and strong families. Parents will also learn how spending time in the natural world builds resilience in young children to help them overcome

the impacts of adverse experiences and grow into healthy, happy, contributing members of the community.

Thanks to a generous grant from United Way, a donation from Motherlove Herbal Company, and other funds, FSLR should be starting this fall. We are currently projecting that 27 classes (each with 16 children) will attend the program five days over the school year. As of this writing, we are still working out various details with the School District, and we still are in need of some additional funding, but we still project that the program will be up and running



early this fall. If you would like to learn more about the program, explore how other preschools could participate in FSLR, or you are interested in helping us fund this program, please contact me at mpec@hikeandlearn.org or Taylor Driver at taylor@hikeandlearn.org. 🐾

Saying Good-bye to Summer is for the Birds

By Dave Van Manen



It's that time of year again, when summer visitors fly back to their cold season haunts, leaving the woods to the hardy ones who don't seem to mind the snowy landscape, the relative lack of insects, and the cold winter nights. Turkey vultures, hummingbirds, tanagers, black-headed grosbeaks and other

fair-weather birds are on their way to points south. Left behind are the chickadees, nuthatches, woodpeckers, jays and others that will share the fall colors and then the winter's short days and long nights with us.

I've often wondered how these little creatures, some weighing less than an ounce, survive a bitter cold winter night. I remember snowshoeing along the Devil's Canyon Trail on a late afternoon one winter several years ago. The snow was falling gently and the thermometer was well below zero. I would pause now and then to take it all in – the sound of the snowflakes as they landed, the feel of the icy air surrounding my body, the experience of being fully immersed in a frigid winter landscape. On one of those pauses, I heard a faint sound coming from the lower branches of a small white fir tree. A closer inspection led to my first sighting of a golden-crowned kinglet. I was working hard to stay warm in such a cold place, yet here was this little bird that I've since learned weighs about as much as a couple of pennies, very much alive.

Birds are warm-blooded animals, with an average body temperature of about 105F thanks to their very high metabolism. The truth is, it is often quite a life-threatening challenge, particularly for very small birds, to stay warm enough to survive a night of -25F. So they have evolved several adaptations, some physical, some behavioral, to help survive the cold.

Feathers provide a remarkable amount of

insulation, and several species grow additional feathers as part of the fall molt that provide additional insulation. Some birds really chow down in the fall to develop reserves of fat that insulate as well as provide additional energy for generating heat. And birds are able to constrict blood to their extremities, reducing heat loss. Special scales on their legs and feet further minimize loss of heat.

Birds have a variety of behaviors that help them stave off the cold. When the sun is shining, birds will put their backs to the sun and open up their feathers to allow more solar energy to reach their skin and feathers. Fluffing, as the word conjures, is the act of puffing out their feathers to create air pockets that help retain body heat, while tucking includes standing on one leg, crouching to cover both legs, and tucking their beaks into their feathered bodies to breathe warmer air while decreasing exposure to the cold. Shivering, which does burn more calories to generate more body heat and raise metabolic rate, can effectively help survive extremely cold conditions, but can not be done too long. Some species, including chickadees, will enter into a state of reduced metabolism, known as torpor, on very cold nights. In this state, body temperature is lowered twenty, thirty or even as much as fifty degrees, burning fewer calories to maintain body heat.

Many small birds will gather together into a small space such as a tree cavity, nest box, or a tight spot among tree branches to communally help survive a cold night. Known as roosting, chickadees, bluebirds and wrens are among the species that utilize this techniques to survive extreme cold.

So, as the warm fall days start giving way to winter's cold, and you find yourself tucked into your warm bed in your warm house on some frigid night, know that right outside your walls are some feathered winter friends, working oh so hard to survive the cold night and live to see next summer. ❧

Thank you to Pueblo Diversifies Industries for donating various items; Carol Kyte, Anne Whitfield, Anne Moulton and grandson, Trish Neff, and Pam Kubly for putting the summer newsletter mailing together; Steve Douglas and Dave Overlin for so much help with the forest stewardship work; Hugh Bell, Shane Ewing, and Larry Arns for helping out on the trail stewardship days; Nora McAuliffe and Lamar Trant for all the help/donations with the gift shop and the Beulah Arts Fair; Laura Leyba for such valuable help with various projects.

I Love Being Outdoors

By Sheila Cover

I work as a kindergarten teacher and so I am inside with children all day. Unfortunately, I do not get the opportunity to be outdoors until recess time or when we can go together on a walk as a class. It isn't until after school or on the weekends that I can truly enjoy nature.

However, for the most part, I love being outdoors. For me, being outdoors and spending time in nature is good for me. Here are some good reasons why you, too, should spend more time in nature:



1. Studies show that being in nature for 20 minutes improves vitality. So, if you want to be more resilient and have more zest in life, go outside.
2. People who are out in parks improve their overall mental wellness.
3. Being out in forests and being around trees increases your immune function.
4. Sunlight is beneficial... of course, please use sunscreen.
5. Spending time in nature boosts happiness in all of us.
6. Communing with nature boosts happiness in all of us.
7. Nature can inspire us to become more creative. Get out that sketch book and colored pencils!
8. And nature can help improve our memory. Taking in the sights and sounds of nature is helpful



Being out in nature, including Pueblo Mountain Park and participating in programs through the Mountain Park Environmental Center, has done great things for me in my life. I invite everyone to come to the Mountain Park and experience how nature can help you. You won't regret it. 🐾



Yes!!! I want to join the Mountain Park Environmental Center and be a part of an organization that helps folks of all ages connect with Nature! Members receive the *Mountain Park News*, a discount on bookshop items and program fees, and the satisfaction of supporting an organization dedicated to the promotion of ecological literacy. Your Support is tax-deductible!

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**MAJESTIC
PONDEROSA
PINES
STAR
FILLED
NIGHTS
FIRE
CIRCLE**

Hello! My name is Tom Barr and I am the new Lodge Sales Manager here at the beautiful Horseshoe Lodge and Retreat Center. I am thrilled to be a part of this historic park and facility that has been so lovingly renovated. The Lodge has eleven uniquely decorated and cozy overnight rooms available during events and retreats. Our rooms are also perfect for individuals, couples or families for an overnight getaway and to enjoy some peace and quiet. Our warm and comfortable Bear Breakout Room is a great space for guests to enjoy their breakfast and snacks, relax or play some board games with the family.

We also have three classrooms and lots of porch space for meetings and other gatherings. The historic Pavilion is available for rent for those needing a space for larger groups. The Pavilion is truly one of our most unique features. From the wrought iron strapped log beams to the beautiful stone fireplace and wagon wheel chandeliers, the Pavilion is perfect for meetings, events and weddings.

If you are interested in holding a retreat, business meeting, family reunion, if you are just looking for peaceful overnight lodging, or if you are interested in a tour, please contact me at 719-485-4444. There are so many aspects to this job that I truly enjoy, but my favorite has to be that I get to connect with people and Nature simultaneously. To celebrate the Fall season, we are offering a 20% discount on all individual room bookings in October and November. Just use the code Fall16 when booking your room!

**BRING YOUR FAMILY FOR
A LITTLE GETAWAY**

GREAT PLACE FOR GROUP GATHERINGS - FAMILY REUNIONS, BUSINESS MEETINGS, YOGA RETREAT...



"Not only is the lodge a gorgeous and comfortable place to stay, but they do a marvelous job of taking the environment into consideration. Everything they do revolves around conservation AND they are willing to teach you about it as well. It was such a lovely room and we loved the "common room" with the fireplace!"

~ Heather A

"The Horseshoe Lodge is a hidden gem in the Wet Mountains of southern Colorado -- a fabulous mix of retro-WPA era architecture with contemporary and updated interiors. Rooms are cozy havens, decorated with home-made quilts and exuding a vibe that is perfectly in tune with the outdoor environment. Serene, restful, non-fancy but absolutely high quality accommodations. Food tastes home-made and also perfectly complements the natural surroundings. Great seating areas to chill in inside, great hiking trails and outdoor huts for refreshing repose outdoors. Love, love this place. Unpretentious, authentic, and staying here supports a great educational mission."

~ Jennifer R



IDEAL FOR COUPLES WHO NEED A NIGHT AWAY

20% DISCOUNT ON INDIVIDUAL ROOM BOOKINGS THIS FALL!

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Why did you Choose to Become an Earth Studies Ranger?

By Taylor Driver

It is hard to believe that in 15 years the Earth Studies Program has gone from serving three District 60 Schools to now, as we celebrate our 9th year of serving every 5th grader the District. A lot has changed over the years, but the one thing that has not, are the passionate, dedicated Rangers who make this program what it is. So as I reflected on why I love waking up to come to my job, I thought it might be nice to hear what the inspiration is for some of the folks who make Earth Studies happen:

Ranger Chickadee: I love to share my passion for the outdoors with kids. To watch their worlds open up as they begin to understand a little more of the earth we are blessed to live on. I enjoy hiking, exploring, creating, and discussing with the students. They are grateful to be given the opportunity to come to the mountains!

Ranger Pine: I choose to be a ranger because it is the healthiest and most satisfying work, way of life, and means of serving the Earth, my community and the future of humanity that I have found so far.

Ranger Marty: I love to see two types of kids up here. Those who never get out into nature and are amazed and wide-eyed and enjoying something totally different. The other are those who have extensive experience outside and are SO excited to do everything- some are almost

uncontrollable, but it is a joy to see this level of enthusiasm as a ranger.

Ranger Rusty: The Kids! The Rangers have the privilege of guiding them into experiences they might not have experienced otherwise. Watching their faces when they see or learn something unexpected is priceless.

Ranger Aspen: I remember one little girl, when I was working as a camp host at Cordova Pass at the trailhead to the West Spanish Peak, who was walking around, binoculars in hand searching for birds. I stopped to tell to her how the forest she was seeing is the largest stand of Bristlecone Pine in the world. She proceeded to tell me all about the different kinds of birds that lived in the area. Her enthusiasm about nature and her desire to learn all she could about the natural world around her inspired me. It was then I knew that I wanted to spend the rest of my life helping others to experience the magic and wonderment of nature.

Ranger Sandy: There is nothing more fulfilling than to see children's faces light up as they are given the chance to explore hands-on in our outdoor classroom. The time they get to spend here, out in open spaces, away from technology is invaluable. To be a part of facilitating that experience and helping their love and respect of nature grow is one of the best jobs I could have. 🌲



Guided Hikes – Fall

A guided hike in Pueblo Mountain Park in Beulah is a great place to see leaves dancing in the autumn sun! It is best to dress for varying weather, wear a sunhat and sunscreen, and wear good hiking shoes. Also bring along a water bottle and snacks on these moderately strenuous hikes that are educational and fun. Unless otherwise stated, most hikes last from two to three hours and are appropriate for adults and children over 12. Group size usually limited to 15; members free, non-members \$5. Note that if snow conditions warrant, a hike may become a snowshoe hike – and MPEC has lots of snowshoes.

Registration required: www.hikeandlearn.org or (719) 485-4444.

- **Autumn Equinox Hike** Acknowledge the arrival of fall on this hike in Colorado's lovely southern foothills. **Sun, Sept 18, 1pm**
- **Zuke's Autumn Dog Hike** A great way to enjoy a walk with your dog with other dog-lovers. Our last dog hike until next spring. **Sun, Sept 25, 10am**
- **Full Moon Hike** Break away from your routine and take a Friday evening break for MPEC's last scheduled full moon hike of 2016. **Fri, Oct 14, 6:30pm**
- **Park History Hike** Learn about the park's amazing cultural history while walking the park's historic trails with Ranger Dave Van Manen. **Sat, Oct 15, 4pm**
- **Autumn Color Hike** Enjoy the autumn colors that are so richly on display by the area's cottonwoods and oaks and the fall wildflowers that may still be hanging on a month into fall on this hike into the parks' western reaches on the Northridge Trail. **Sun, Oct 23, 10am**
- **Nature Literature Hike** Enjoy a mid-autumn hike inspired by a mountain landscape and readings from writers who wrote so eloquently about the natural world. Bring along a short reading if you'd like; we will have several ready to go for your listening and reflection. **Sat, Nov 5, 10am**
- **Post-Thanksgiving Hike** Sticking with our annual tradition, we'll be hiking off the holiday calories with a hike along the late autumn trails of the Mountain Park. **Sun, Nov 27, 1pm**
- **Snowshoe Hike** We don't really know if there will be enough snow on the ground, but if there is, we'll enjoy a snowshoe in the park. If not, then we'll take a hike before MPEC's Open House at the Horseshoe Lodge and Beulah's Annual Yule Log Celebration at the Pavilion. **Sun, Dec 11, 10am**

"I SEE THE TURNING OF A LEAF
DANCING IN AN AUTUMN SUN,
AND BRILLIANT SHADES OF
CRIMSON GLOWING WHEN A
DAY IS DONE."
~ HAZELMARIE MATTIE
ELLIOTT

FALL PROGRAMS AT MPEC

For all the details, pricing, and to register for these programs, go to MPEC's website at www.hikeandlearn.com and click on PROGRAMS. If you need assistance with registering on-line, or if you do not have access to a computer, please call 719-485-4444.

- **Autumn Equinox Drum Circle** Acknowledge the halfway point between the summer and winter solstices around MPEC's fire circle. **Sun, Sept 18, 6:30-8pm**
- **Mexican Spotted Owl Talk followed by Owl Prowl** In collaboration with several other area agencies, MPEC is happy to offer this talk on the Mexican Spotted Owl followed by a guided hike to look for and learn about owls that call the Beulah area home. **Fri, Oct 7, Talk at 6pm, Owl Prowl 7pm**
- **Nature Toddlers** A wonderful way to experience the wonders of Nature with your little one(s). **Fridays at 10am, Oct 14, Nov 11**
- **Movie on the Lawn (or in the Pavilion): The CCC (Civilian Conservation Corps)** A great hour-long film on how so much of our nation's park infrastructure, including Pueblo Mountain Park, was built thanks to FDR's depression-era work programs. **Sat, Oct 15, 6:30 pm (food/ snacks available 6pm)**
- **Women's Winter Solstice Day Retreat** Enjoy a day of self care during this busy time of the year – journaling, walking, time in Nature. Includes a healthy delicious lunch! **Sat, Dec 3, 9:30am-3pm**
- **MPEC Winter Open House** Stop by MPEC for some holiday festiveness, hot cocoa and s'mores before heading over to the Pavilion for the Yule Log Celebration. **Sun, Dec 11, 11am-1pm**
- **Winter Solstice Drum Circle** Bundle up and enjoy a drumming circle around a warm campfire! **Sun, Dec 18, 6:30-8pm**



LifeisGood.com

What's New at the MPEC Nature Shop

By Lamar Trant

It's never too early to start shopping for the holidays, and MPEC's Nature Shop has some great new items, with more arriving all the time. *Life is Good* long sleeve t-shirts, hats, mugs and snuggly socks are a perfect gift with many nature themes. Several are adorned with the optimistic message, "Do What You Love, Love What You Do."



A purchase from the Nature Shop helps MPEC's outdoor education programs that are all about connecting kids to Nature. The *Life is Good* company also donates a minimum of 10% of their profits to help kids overcome poverty, violence and severe medical challenges through outdoor experiences and play. So, along with some great gift items, all of your purchases at MPEC's Nature Shop help make a difference in the lives of many children and families.

Yummy Gelato, as previously featured at Exquisite Taste on Union Ave, is also now available for purchase in the Nature Shop. Flavors vary and include Lemon Poppyseed, MPECable Taste Trail Mix, Blueberry Cheesecake, Mint Stracciatella and other favorites.

Remember, MPEC members receive a 10% discount in the Nature Shop, and gift certificates are now available. Current Nature Shop hours are 8am-4pm Monday through Friday and weekends when other programs are scheduled. Nature Shop products will also be available during the Beulah Challenge run Saturday, October 1st and during the Yule Log celebration on Sunday, December 11.

This holiday season give the simple gift that affirms.... *Life is Good!*



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"THE PUREST JOY OF ALL IS THE JOY OF NATURE." ~ LEO TOLSTOY

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Mountain-Park-Environmental-Center>

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