

Children's programs

Regularly occurring children's programs include *Book Break* on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday at 10:30, *Story Time* on Tuesdays from 10:30 to 11:15, *Toddler Time* on Thursdays at 9:30 and 10:30, and *Paws to Read* on Monday and Wednesday from 4 to 5.

There will be a *Homeschool @ MO* program from 1:30 to 2:30 on Monday, Dec. 9 about *Coding with Bee Bots*. Homeschoolers will create their own code, then test for accuracy by using Bee Bot and pressing Go. Several tasks and challenges at different levels will be offered. For ages 5 to 12. Registration required.

LEGO Build will meet on Saturday, Dec. 21 from 10 to 11:30. Use our large collection of LEGOs to build to your heart's content. All ages welcome.

Teen and Tween programs

Every Wednesday from 3 to 5 an *All Ages Knitting* group meets in the study room. Practice materials are provided but attendees are encouraged to bring their own projects.

Play *Study Break Bingo* at the library from 3:30 to 4:30 on Tuesday, Dec. 10. Join us right after school for a quick game of B-I-N-G-O. There will be snacks and prizes! No registration needed.

On Mondays, Dec. 9 and 16, come to the library for free math tutoring at all levels taught by experienced adult tutors. No appointment needed. Not held on Monday Dec.23 or 30 due to school break.

The library district's *Artist in Residence* will be

at the library from 2 to 4 on Sunday, Dec. 15 to help with holiday card creations made of various upcycled materials such as paper bags, vintage paper and other materials. The class is open to those aged 16 and up. Registration required.

Teens Make Tuesday on December 17 from 4 to 5:30 will offer the chance to make last-minute gifts such as alcohol ink ornaments, hot chocolate reindeer, and gingerbread foot scrub. Open to ages 12 to 18. Registration is preferred.

The *Paper Tigers Origami Club* will meet from 4:15 to 5:30 on Friday, Dec. 20. Open to adults and teens of all skill levels, all materials are provided. No experience necessary and registration is preferred.

The *Monument Library Anime Club*, open to those 13 and older, will meet from 5 to 6:30 on Thursday, Dec. 26. Share anime with others who love it, eat snacks, and shape the club for the future. No registration required.

Adult Programs

See above for descriptions of *All Ages Knitting*, *Paper Tigers Origami*, and holiday card creations with PPLD's *Artist in Residence*.

Regularly occurring adult programs include *Senior Chats* on Wednesdays from 10 to noon, yoga on Thursdays from noon to 1 and the *Monument Spinning Group* on the fourth Thursday of the month at 1:30. Yoga will not be held on Dec. 26.

The *Monument Bookworms* will meet from

7 to 8:30 on Tuesday, Dec. 10 to discuss *News of the World* by Paulette Jiles. All are welcome to attend this monthly book group.

The *Life Circles Writing Group*, dedicated to writing memories of life experiences, will meet from 9:30 to 11:30 on Monday, Dec. 16. This supportive group will help provide the discipline and support to help reach your writing goals.

Palmer Lake Library Events

The Palmer Lake Book Group meets at 9 a.m. on the first Friday of each month. Please call 481-2587 for the latest selection. All are welcome.

Homeschool @ PA from 1 to 2 on Friday, Dec. 13 is about *Holidays Around the World*, including craft, food, and ways countries celebrate. Visit Norway, China, and Mexico on this tour.

Family Story Times are at 10:30 each Wednesday. A special story time on Wednesday, Dec. 18 is *Santa's Missing Sleigh*. Santa's sleigh is missing. Will Sienna, Joey and Elf Denise find it in time, or will Christmas be canceled? Recommended for ages 2 to 10.

Toddler Time at Palmer Lake is on Fridays at 10:30.

Happy Holidays from your library!

Please note that all Pikes Peak Library District facilities will be closed all day on Dec. 24 and 25 and will close at 4 p.m. on Dec. 31 and remain closed on Jan. 1.

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Palmer Lake Historical Society, Nov. 21

Railroad historian and slides bring "Wildflower Excursion" train to life

By Sigi Walker

On November 21, the Palmer Lake Historical Society welcomed well-known railroad historian Mel MacFarland as the evening's presenter. Cold and icy weather resulted in fewer attendees, who were treated to Mel's slide show presentation of summer wildflowers. The use of his vintage slide projector is a hallmark of Mel's presentations.

Mel told the history of the Colorado Midland Railway's famous "Wildflower Excursion" train. The purpose originally was not to see wildflowers, but to inspect the condition of the track. The Colorado Midland subsequently operated these popular excursions from 1887 until 1918 with the ride going from Colorado Springs to South Park.

In his presentation, Mel included period photographs, many of which are posed commercial photos contracted by the railroad. But Mel continues to discover photos taken by people who rode the train to add them to his collection. Mel also explained that there are few wildflowers left along the Colorado Midland's former route because so many of the flowers were picked there were not enough left to successfully reseed the following year's crop.

The Colorado Midland Railway was the first standard gauge railroad in Colorado built over the Continental Divide. Construction began in 1886, building



Above: Palmer Lake Historical Society Vice President Su Ketchmark and presenter Mel McFarland with vintage slide projector. *Photo by John Haney.*

west from Colorado Springs (now Old Colorado City) through the mountains to New Castle. From there, the Midland had trackage rights over the Denver & Rio Grande RR to Glenwood Springs and Grand Junction. It hauled coal, livestock, hay, wool, lumber, produce, other goods, and passengers before service ended in

1918. It was possibly the largest rail abandonment in the world. The former roundhouse in Colorado Springs, over 130 years old, still stands at 21st and Hwy 24 and has been repurposed into a brew pub and other retail businesses.

There was also an announcement by museum director Roger Davis at the event. He informed the audience that the updated reprint of Palmer Lake, A Historical Narrative by Marian Sabin would be available for purchase around December 1 in the Vaile Museum.

There will be no December PLHS program, but mark your calendars for Sun., Dec. 15 for the Palmer Lake annual Yule Log Hunt and Wassail Ceremony, a tradition dating from 1934. The hunt begins at 1 p.m. Participants should arrive at Palmer Lake Town Hall, 28 Valley Crescent around 12:30 p.m. On Thurs., Jan. 16, PLHS will host its annual potluck and membership meeting at Palmer Lake Town Hall. Doors open at 6:30 p.m.; the program begins at 7 p.m. Bring a vegetable, salad or dessert to share. PLHS will provide baked ham, rolls, and beverages. Palmer Lake Historical Society events and programs are free and open to all,

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High Altitude Nature and Gardening (HANG)

Local trees: the heroes and villains

By Janet Sellers

Right now, it's snowy and icy outside. It's winter and our gardens have been put to bed for the season.

This is a good time to research and plan for next season. On volunteer day during Creek Week at Fox Run Regional Park, we learned that many plants and trees in our area are land and water heroes, but some are invasive villains. Our parks have installed boot brushing stations for hikers to clean their shoes at the trailhead, so they don't bring invasive weed seeds that might be hiding in their boots into the parks.

Hero Trees

Willows are one of our hero trees. Native American tribes use willows for medicine, furniture, baskets, drums and meat-drying racks. Willow bark tea is the equivalent of aspirin and you can chew the bark to relieve headaches.

Our local peachleaf willow is native to southern Canada and the USA. It grows in riparian areas which act as a sponge for floodwater and can help improve water quality. It's a small to medium-sized tree with one or more trunks and grows up to 40 feet tall. It provides food and shelter to many animals including rabbits, deer, beaver and birds.

Alamosa or cottonwood trees have many uses. Fun facts about our Eastern Plains cottonwood trees can be found in the 1804 Lewis and Clark expedition. Native Americans taught the explorers how to make canoes by hollowing out the trunks of large trees. Cottonwood is found in floodplains, bordering streams, near springs and in moist woodland, but it is very vulnerable to fire. It's one of the largest north American hardwoods, reaching up to 130 feet tall. It serves as food for caterpillars, moths and butterflies. The young trees, branches and twigs are food for deer, mice, beaver and grouse.

Villain trees

Siberian Elm was brought to the US in the 1860s to be used as wind breaks for houses and livestock and to control soil erosion. But while it thrives in harsh conditions, it competes with native trees and takes over and must be removed all the way down to the roots. It is now classified as a noxious weed. Fire resistant, it colonizes burned areas but crowds out cottonwood and box elders. One tree will use 80 to 120 gallons of water a day. Another villain is the Russian olive. It has been illegal to sell Russian olives in Colorado since 2003.

Woody and festive fun

It's been dreary and cold outside. I'm collecting fallen pinecones from our beloved ponderosa and Colorado blue spruce to make festive decorations to cheer things up. By the way, the Friends of Fox Run Park are having a "wood cookie" ornament party at the warming hut by the lakes December 14 from 1 to 3 p.m. and everyone's invited. Besides having fun making ornaments from ponderosa wood cookies and pinecones, we can learn more about our local plants and trees at the same time. Hope to see you and your family there.



Janet Sellers is an avid ethnoecologist and "lazy gardener." She is an artist, writer, and speaker on behalf of forests in Colorado. Send her your nature and garden tips: janetsellers@ocn.me