

Most of us experience viewing art, particularly genuinely pleasant art, as a powerfully uplifting, sustaining (usually indoor) resource we can enjoy, especially in times like bad weather and current traumas of the pandemic's social restrictions. Much of the scientific, academic lens cautiously leans on data, studies, and previous findings, yet, how valid is that outsider lens for our bouncing back? Thankfully, the role art plays is a new scientific aspect of inquiry for community, resilience, and all of us.

Chemical romance

Scientific studies have proven that art appreciation improves our quality of life and makes us feel good. When we create art, we elevate our mood, we improve our ability to problem solve and open our minds to new ideas. According to Dr. Shelley Carson's creativity, psychopathology, and resilience studies at Harvard, art's ability to improve our mood broadens our attention, and making and viewing art increases open-mindedness so we see more possibilities—more options—as we solve problems of all sorts in

our lives. University College of London neurobiology professor Semir Zeki affirmed that when we stare at great art, our brain is stimulated as when we fall in love. Art brings increased levels of dopamine, a neurotransmitter that aids in controlling the brain's reward and pleasure centers. Zeki did brain scans of 30-some subjects looking at art, finding increased levels of dopamine and frontal cortex activity. He found that beautiful art triggered the same pleasure center activity as being in love and even recreational drug use. In contrast, visually disturbing, "shock/horror" art (Bosch, Goya, Francis Bacon) showed less brain activity than, say, Botticelli's Venus, the goddess of love. The National Academy of Sciences of America reports that dopamine is a neurotransmitter released throughout the brain to encode salience and facilitate the formation of associative memory. Dopamine release from the locus coeruleus to the dorsal hippocampus promotes spatial learning and memory. Of course, visual art firsthand is most powerful.

Seeing the colors, brushstrokes in a painting, textures in mixed media or sculptures in the round have immediate, visceral impact. Art discoveries in person with pencil and paints—or on screen with museums or individual artists via augmented reality—could be an uplifting adventure for well-being. We can make an art experience any time, any day, and benefit instantly. The possibilities for our creative resilience are endless!

Upcoming Neuro Bureau brain art competition

The Neuro Bureau is a forum and collaborative initiative that supports "open neuroscience"—embracing the ideas that data, methods, and ideas can be freely shared. Its annual Brain-Art Competition highlights aesthetically oriented aspects of the field. Contact Neurobureau.org for details. Janet Sellers is an artist, writer, public speaker, and instructor. Her paintings and public art sculptures are exhibited on Earth. JanetSellers@ocn.me.

Snapshots of Our Community

DWFPD's new tender



Above The new \$250,000 tender truck housed at Station 1 carries 3,500 gallons of water, pumping it at a rate of 500 gallons per minute. Training to drive the truck continues. Donald Wescott Chief Vinny Burns said although there is good baffling within the truck, driving a vehicle carrying water is complicated. Burns pointed out the money the district receives from the 2017 mill levy increase was used to purchase this vehicle. Photo courtesy of Donald Wescott Fire Protection District.

Monument street improvements



Above: On Oct. 1, street work was in progress at the intersection of Washington and Second Streets in downtown Monument. The project was designed to upgrade the four corners and improve the visibility for cars on the approach to Second Street from Washington. The project included sidewalk improvements, including making them compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act, adding curbside islands, and improving sight lines. Photo by David Futey.

Creek Week in Palmer Lake



Above Members of the Palmer Lake Parks Commission participated in the seventh annual Fountain Creek Watershed Creek Week on Oct. 3. They invited the public and local high school students to help clean up around Palmer Lake. They collected deadwood and trash from the shoreline. Pictured are volunteers with commission members Michael Pietsch, kneeling, and Kirk Noll, second from left. Photo by Katherine Pietsch.

Lions upgrade playground



totaling \$2000.00 to (L-R), Dawn Collins Palmer Lake Town Manager, and Palmer Lake Parks Commission members, Reid Wiecks, Kirk Noll, and Michael Pietsch,. Our Lions Club is grateful for the guidance from Palmer Lake leaders on project needs, and we look forward to many future opportunities to help the Palmer Lake Star shine brighter every year. Lions motto is, WE SERVE. Photo and caption provided by Gordon Reichal.

Left: El Paso County Tri-Lakes Lions Club and the Town of Palmer Lake are working together as a team, to upgrade the lake recreation playground swing area. Lions are known as the Knights of Sight and are comprised of community service members supporting area improvement projects and vision challenged residents in need of assistance. In the center is Tri-Lakes Lions Club President Jim Naylor who presented a contribution

Empty Bowls benefits TLC



Above On Oct. 3, the Annual Empty Bowls Event and Virtual Silent Auction, a fundraiser for Tri-Lakes Cares (TLC) , was held as an outdoor drive-through venue at Lewis-Palmer High School. Sponsored by Monument Hill Kiwanis Club, it was organized and provided through the combined efforts of over 40 volunteers from the Kiwanians, TLC, Lewis-Palmer and Palmer Ridge High School Key Clubs, and the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs Circle K Club. Over \$15,000 was raised by ticket sales of 300-plus soup bowls made by local potters and wood turners, cash donations and the Silent Auction. Since mid-March, TLC has averaged 20 new households per month who are seeking assistance. In September 2020, housing assistance services (rent/mortgage assistance) increased by 150% from September 2019. The holiday season is upon us; if you would like to help TLC with holiday food or gifts for youths and seniors, visit www.tri-lakescares.org and click on the links on the homepage. Pictured are Monument Hill Kiwanis volunteers and LPHS and PRHS Key Club volunteers. Photos by Sharon Williams.