

Turf replacement can include mulch and ornamental grasses, berm landscaping, and various groundcovers. Groundcovers are any low-lying plant that you can walk on. Native

groundcovers, shrubs, and trees provide water-wise alternatives that benefit pollinators and our ecosystem. When carefully planned, water-wise landscaping offers beauty and low-

maintenance and does not require the fertilizer, pesticides, and labor needed with turf lawns.

Janet Sellers is an avid "lazy gardener" letting Mother Nature lead the way for

natural growing wisdom. Reach her at JanetSellers@OCN.me.

Art Matters

Ikigai: connecting to creative genius



By Janet Sellers

The concept of humans looking for something that imbues a purpose for life is as ancient as humankind. It's called "Ikigai" in Japanese. "Iki" means life, "gai" means result, fruit, and benefit. We can creatively look into our own Ikigai through the arts by making things, by connecting with the arts thoughtfully and by using strategies to improve our days. Research shows that our ikigai powerfully affects our health and well-being.

"It has been suggested that the practice of meditation is associated to neuroplasticity phenomena, reducing age-related brain degeneration and improving cognitive functions. Neuroimaging studies have shown that the brain connectivity changes in meditators" (National Library of Medicine (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6312586/>)). The study throws light on how mindfulness may play a role for preventive strategies in memory processes, particularly Alzheimer's disease and other pathologies.

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We don't have to be an artist to be creative for improving our quality of life, but some of the tools artists use are helpful for everyone. Meditative practices have been very instrumental in creating a personal space for health and well-being. For decades, many artists and creatives in the media and film industries have used things like the workbook *The Artist's Way* by Julia Cameron to create their own thoughtful framework for daily living.

When we listen to our intuition and not our inner critic, we can solve problems and of course create good

things in our life at any age. In teaching *The Artist's Way* for many years, I offered three shareable strategies in workshops to help people make daily creative living habits. The goal was to create a pathway to Ikigai. We all know that taking a walk for 20 minutes a day is very healthy for our bodies but it's also healthy for our minds. The repetitive action of walking balances us and we are able to access our body and mind holistically.

Artist Pages are a form of journaling or sketch-booking that help us to clean up the clutter of our mind and put on paper thoughts and feelings instead of carrying them around in our head. It unloads a lot. After about three weeks of doing this, a person often finds they're able to leave their concerns on the written page or sketchbook.

Instead of a person merely activating hormones for "fight or flight" in their day, downloading concerns to a page prompts a creative way of thinking and problem solving.

The Artist Date is something that is known from ancient times. People need a weekly "something" planned and created to look forward to, then do it, and look back at that pleasant time for the rest of the week. This is a very healing activity that develops innovative thinking and builds neural pathways for optimizing habits and changing our lives for the better.

Janet Sellers is an artist, writer and speaker who makes and shares her artworks locally and nationally via galleries, writing, and talks on art and making things. Contact her at JanetSellers@ocn.me.

Snapshots of Our Community

Palmer Lake Outdoor Classic



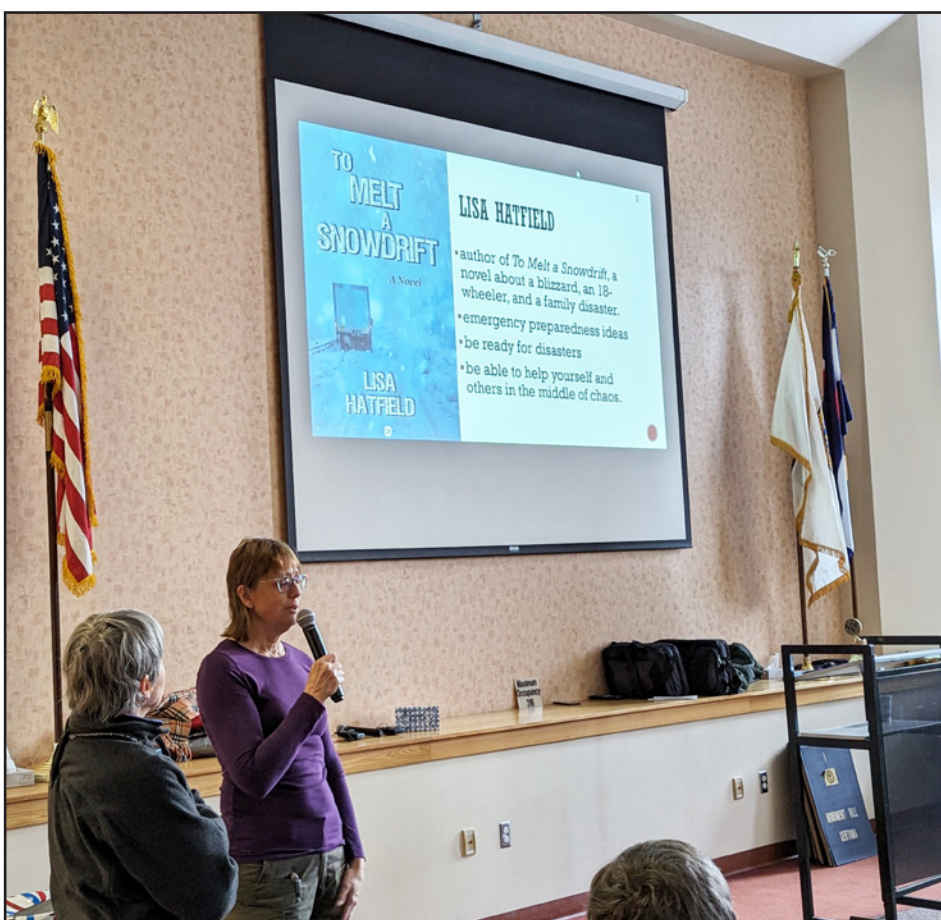
Above: About 1,1100 people bundled up to watch the 3rd Annual Palmer Lake Outdoor Classic on a frozen Palmer Lake on Jan. 6. The temperature was around 20 degrees when the Palmer Lake Star was lit, and fireworks brightened the dark sky to mark the start of the high school tournament. There were fire pits to warm the crowd and several food trucks offering a variety of treats. Pine Creek beat Palmer High of Colorado Springs 3-2 to take home the championship trophy. Lewis-Palmer finished third by defeating Chaparral 3-1 in the consolation final. The event proceeds covered all of Lewis-Palmer's hockey team's fees for the season. *Photo by Michael Weinfeld.*

Ice fishing in a blizzard, Jan. 8



Above: No heat, no hut, no problem. This ice fisherman didn't let sub-zero temperatures and wind-blown snow stop him from trying his luck on Monument Lake on Jan. 8. Of course, it didn't stop this reporter from walking his dog, either. The Tri-Lakes area got several inches of snow. Windchills were in the double digits below zero. *Photo by Michael Weinfeld.*

Winter storm preparedness



Above: At the Monument Hill Kiwanis meeting on Jan. 13 at the "Big Red" D 38 administration building in Monument, Lisa Hatfield, author of *To Melt a Snowdrift*, presented guidelines to avoid traveling in severe winter weather and ways to prepare that could help one survive if caught out. She was accompanied by Dr. Gayle Humm, who, after her military service, was part of El Paso County Search and Rescue and shared some of her experiences rescuing hikers and others stranded in severe conditions. See *Emergency Preparedness Guide* at <https://epc-assets.elpasoco.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/OEM/PPROEM-Preparedness-Guide-Final-Feb2023.pdf>. *Photo by Steve Pate.*

Ignition-resistant gardens



Above: Waterwise landscaping and foundation plantings can also be resistant to wildfires, said Cassie Olgren, Monument's Parks & Trails planner and program manager, to the Tri-Lakes Women's Club Garden interest group. She described a safe, sustainable approach to landscaping to reduce the risks of homes catching fire where grassland, forests, and human development overlap and we are vulnerable to wildland fires. The keys are regular yard and vegetation maintenance; choosing the right plants, fences, and mulches; and designing your landscape to include fire breaks. See Olgren's "Firewise Landscaping" presentation full of beautiful examples at <https://townofmonument.org/524/Gardening-and-Landscaping-Videos-and-Cla>. Visit the town's Waterwise Garden on the northwest corner of Adams and Second Street. Olgren is searching for community groups to get involved with town gardening and the Heart of Monument Play Park projects. Contact her at colgren@tomgov.org. For information on Tri-Lakes Women's Club activities, see <https://trilakeswomen39sclub.wildapricot.org/>. *Photo by Lisa Hatfield.*