

DAILY RECORD

Built on Trust, Focused on Community

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All are welcome at Sunday nature/poetry walk at Olmstead Historical State Park

By KARL HOLAPPA staff writer



Wildflowers are pictured at Olmstead Historical State Park. Community members are welcome to participate in a nature poetry walk at the park Sunday.



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There's nothing like the magic of being out in nature when one wants to get in touch with their own feelings.

Community members will have the chance to do just that at a nature and poetry walk slated for Sunday at Olmstead Place Historical State Park west of Ellensburg. The event is co-hosted by Marie Marchand, Ellensburg's first Poet Laureate and Northwest Expressive Arts Response Executive Director Nan Doolittle.

At the event, participants will be able to participate in a walk that will lead along Coleman/Altapes Creek, as well as through the pioneer gardens at the park. Participants will also have the opportunity to create a journal of their experiences during the walk.



Doolittle said the event will begin with a dedication to the land, which has been inhabited for generations by local Native Americans prior to westward expansion. As the event takes place on Sept. 11, she said a dedication will also be made to the significance of that date in everyone's memory.

The event will last approximately two hours and will begin at the first turnoff to the park where the original schoolhouse is located. From there, Doolittle said the introductions will begin, as well as a nature-based poetry reading will take place.

"We will invite people to pick up their blank journals and art supplies as they stroll," she said. "They can also take their phones or cameras if it helps inspire them along the walk."

Doolittle said the event is designed to be very relaxed and accessible to anyone regardless of physical condition. For mobility-impaired participants, she said a shuttle will be available to take them from one part of the park to the other.

"There are no expectations," she said of participants. "After the initial stroll, people are welcome to walk the Altapes Creek trail, but it is not a requirement."

For those interested in taking the walk along the creek, the distance is approximately one-half mile along a meandering and level path. Doolittle encouraged those interested in that portion of the event to wear appropriate footwear.

Once the walk along the creek is complete, Doolittle said the journals will be decorated, and she said people are welcome to share their observations and any poetry they may have created during the experience. She also encouraged people to bring water and sunscreen.

“It’s going to be a pleasant morning weatherwise,” she said. “There’s plenty of shade at the cabin.”

Doolittle said the event was planned as a way to introduce community members to the city’s first-ever Poet Laureate, as well as to introduce locals to a beautiful outdoor location that some may have never experienced. Doolittle has been enjoying the grounds at Olmstead since she moved to the area 19 years ago.

“It’s one of my favorite places, and I think it’s perfect for this event,” she said. “Nature has always been a wonder to me and a healer. I make a point to go to Olmstead every season to see the snow in the winter, the bulbs in the spring, and the vegetables in the summer.”

Although walking will be involved in certain portions of the event, Doolittle said there will be something for all at the event who want to join and get in touch with nature.

“We want to emphasize that everyone is invited, no matter what their physical abilities are,” she said.

The event will take place from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. and participants will either need a Discover Pass or pay the parking fee.

SOME NATURE

Some nature’s better than other nature
And all is better than no nature at all.
I bet the best nature is this snip

Right under my butt, better than all
The rest—sitting on a decaying log
On a brillig day with my friend.

—Jampa Dorje



Marie Marshand, Ellensburg's Poet Laureate



Poetry-Nature Lovers at Omstead State Park near Ellensburg, Washington

Nature and poetry walk brings creative minds together

By KARL HOLAPPA staff writer





The attendees of Sunday's nature and poetry walk at Olmstead Place Historical State Park pose with their decorated journals.





Attendees at Sunday's nature and poetry walk listen to a reading.



Ellensburg's poet laureate Marie Marchand reads a poem at Sunday's nature and poetry walk at Olmstead Place Historical State Park.

Nature and poetry walk brings creative minds together

By **KARL HOLAPPA**
staff writer

Many who spend their free time surrounded by nature find themselves not only captivated but also inspired to express the feelings that are invoked by their experiences in the wild.

Approximately a dozen community members exercised their creative spirits Sunday at Olmstead Place Historical State Park during a nature and poetry walk. The event was co-hosted by Ellensburg's first-ever poet laureate Marie Marchand and Northwest Expressive Arts Response Executive Director Nan Doolittle.

Event attendees were encouraged to take a provided journal with them as they explored the park, keeping a keen sense of their feelings and observations and expressing those through poetry. Afterward,



KARL HOLAPPA/DAILY RECORD

The attendees of Sunday's nature and poetry walk at Olmstead Place Historical State Park pose with their decorated journals.

participants decorated their journals and were encouraged to share their work with the group.

"It's been a beautiful time to gather and to recite poetry in nature," Marchand said of the event as it wrapped up. "It gave people a chance to wander and contemplate. In our society, we don't get much time for that because it's so hurried. Poetry invites us to be an open channel,

and to do that, silence and nature oftentimes help facilitate poetry."

The combination of silence and nature certainly inspired the attendees, who shared highly thoughtful works of poetry they created in less than two hours. The works ranged from observations of the writers' surroundings to more introspective pieces verging on sociology and creation.

As the city's first-ever poet laureate, Marchand said events like the one held Sunday are critical in the community-building process.

"Poetry and literary arts are great tools for self-discovery, as well as for community building," she said. "Oftentimes people think of poetry as something you do alone or that you read alone, but it can also be really strong in connecting people to one another. I think that's what I felt today was people connecting to nature, connecting to poetry, and connecting to one another."

Speaking on the connection between natural surroundings and artistic expression, Marchand said nature and love are two of the most widely utilized components or inspirations for poets since the very be-

ginnings of the discipline.

"We write about being in love and heartbreak, and we write about nature," she said. "It's that open channel idea. There are so many metaphors in nature for our lives, what's going on in our minds, and the struggles we are having. Things like sitting by the creek or watching the flowers can really open us up and help us find healing because healing is facilitated by expression."

As she continues to settle into her laureate post, Marchand said she plans on planning a variety of different types of events that help incorporate community members from all walks of life.

"I believe poetry is for everybody, and that its healing properties are available to everybody," she said. "I want to make it as inclusive as possible."