

Dickinson County Conservation Board

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

OKOBOJI---Earth without art is just eh.

Dickinson County Conservation environmental education coordinator Karess Knudtson certainly thinks so. An artist herself, Knudtson sees the profound impact when people realize the connection between art and nature.

The conservation board is hoping to educate people on this connection through a new series called Art & Nature being implemented at the Dickinson County Nature Center in Okoboji.

"Using 'Art & Nature' together becomes a vehicle for understanding and a way to achieve awareness of the environment," Knudtson said. "I want people to come to one of our new programs, learn something by experiencing the beauty and fascination that lies between the science of the natural world and the act of creating something with their own hands. In our hectic lives it is simply a matter of allowing ourselves a chance to stop, pause and then stretch ourselves beyond our comfort zones just a little bit."

Creative workshops and classes will be held monthly at the nature center, starting with Wooden Wall Art 6 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 28. Participants will paint tree cookies --- slices of tree trunks or limbs -- - to create beautiful pieces of art to hang. Paint in the rings of the tree or create your own unique design; you can even decorate several tree cookies and create a grouping on the wall.

Upcycled Owls will be held 6 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 25, at the nature center. Knudtson will show people how to use what some might call junk to create a treasured piece of garden art shaped like an adorable owl. Think old metal strainers, jar lids, kitchen utensils --- anything metal can be imagined into an owl.

"Participants can use their imagination and bring any upcyclable metal they have around, but we'll also have a large variety of found objects for them to utilize as well," Knudtson said.

Ages 8 and older are welcome for the first two programs of the year, although children must be accompanied by an adult. Please register for the free classes by calling 712-336-6352.

Watercolor artist Anita "Katie" Plucker, who is the first featured artist in the new eARTh art gallery in the nature center, will hold a class called The Illustrated Journal 9 a.m.-4 p.m. Wednesday, March 25.

"We will explore and practice different approaches of recording and documenting feelings, emotions and the world around us with small sketches and watercolor paintings to create an illustrated journal," Plucker said.

To register for the adult class, please contact Plucker at 712-240-6343. Registration is \$50, and Plucker needs a minimum of six students to hold the one-day session.

Art & Nature workshops will continue throughout the year, and examples of creations to be made during each will be on display the nature center. Mark your calendars for these courses:

April 22: Soil Painting, taught by Knudtson
May 27: Watercolors, taught by Glenda Drennen
June 24: Encaustic Beeswax Painting, taught by Knudtson
July 22: Nature Photography, taught by Dan Ruf
Aug. 12-14: Watercolor Workshop, taught by Plucker
Sept. 23: Andy Goldsworthy Art, taught by Knudtson
Oct. 28: Concrete Mixer, taught by Knudtson
Nov. 18: Nature Weaving, instructor to be determined
Dec. 16: Recycled Christmas, taught by Knudtson

In addition to these classes, the Art & Nature series also includes three other facets of creative expression. The eARTh exhibit area in the nature center will feature quarterly artists. Following Plucker will be watercolor artist Glenda Drennen April-June, photographer Dan Ruf July-September, and Knudtson will exhibit her encaustic photography October-December.

A new concert series at the Dickinson County Nature Center outdoor amphitheater will premiere Saturday, June 13. Gates will open at 6 p.m. and concerts will begin at 7 p.m. Concert-goers are welcome to bring a picnic, including a bottle of wine or beer, and blankets or chairs to sit on. Concerts will also be held Saturday, July 11, and Friday, Sept. 4, during the Bee & Butterfly Festival.

The final part of this year's Art & Nature series will be a nature photography contest for the public, with entries for the first competition due April 1.

Details will be released on upcoming classes, featured artists, concerts and the photography contest as those events draw nearer. For more information, please call 712-336-6352 or visit www.dickinsoncountynaturecenter.com.

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