



Off The Pews Newsletter

Fall 2023



A Thanksgiving Wish

Rev. Harriet Dart shared a reflection published on grateful.org last year. Contemplating the myriad difficulties in world at large and tragic loss closer to home, it is very hard to find the Thanksgiving spirit this year.

Returning to grateful.org for some inspiration, I wanted to see if I could find a seed of a thought that would be helpful in reconciling the difficulties with the joy. There I was reminded there are many things in the world I can not control, but I can change the energy of my mind and my heart if I Stop.Look.Go. **Stop.** Cultivate Presence. **Look.** Cultivate Perspective. **Go.** Cultivate Possibility.

This is not a solution or a quick fix to anything, but it redirected my efforts to the constant work needed to tend the garden of my own mind. Difficulties will continue, and my mind will be drawn into thoughts about them. There will be emotions, and I will work through them. But Stop.Look.Go. can help me set aside time and cultivate within myself the peace I want to see in the world and an awareness of the bounty we all enjoy in even the smallest moments.

My Mom frequently walks to town. A couple of weeks ago a leaf crossed her path. She had set a goal at the beginning of 2023 to find one moment each day in which she was "surprised by joy". The leaf crossing her path was the joy for that particular day, "Nan, do you know what a miracle it is in the scope of all creation for that particular leaf to have crossed my path that day? The existence of the leaf and, indeed, my own existence. The likelihood that it would fall off the tree when it did. The wind that had to blow in a certain direction at a certain speed, all on a planet with a the smallest sliver of life sustaining atmosphere? It is really quite extraordinary!"

Her joyous wonder didn't make troubles go away, but it was a welcome reminder of the miracle we're all living.

Have a safe and happy holiday season!



Artwork By AI

The photo at the top of this newsletter was created using Adobe's Firefly AI image generator using the input "Thanksgiving table set for 12 with fall colors". At first glance, it is just what I asked for (even though I used a few too many words). Take a closer look, however, and you begin to see the strange chairs, unbalanced candle arrangement, odd plate assortment, and other idiosyncrasies.

AI has been a part of our lives for decades, but only within the last several years has there been more mainstream conversation about it, but those conversations are lagging behind development. That has never been a great recipe for humanity.

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A Perspective on Education

What is your definition of success? Not *the* definition of success, but *your* definition. You are the architect of the rest of your life, and you have the opportunity to pursue your interests and make them a career.

Education happens in every environment and with every person met along the road. You will learn and you will teach. Is the lesson you are learning beneficial? Are the lessons you teach beneficial to others?

While you are traveling the path to your definition of success, you may change your mind, or your circumstances may change. Will you have built flexibility and resilience into your life? Kindness and forgiveness are helpful tools to building flexibility and resilience.

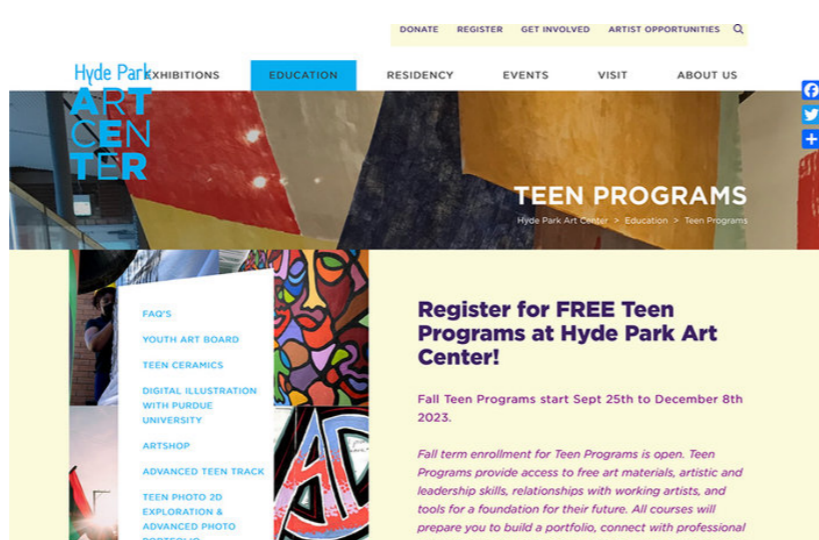
You are likely to have many simultaneous roles in your life—professional, familial, volunteer, and some purely for your enjoyment. Be present for the experiences of each role in order to enjoy them completely. More importantly, be present for the people with whom you share the experiences.

Have you identified the path(s) you will take to the work you want to do? Yes, great! No, great! However you answered the question, check in with yourself regularly to reassess your situation. There is no single way forward for anyone, we each determine our own path.

"Never stop learning, because life never stops teaching." — Unknown

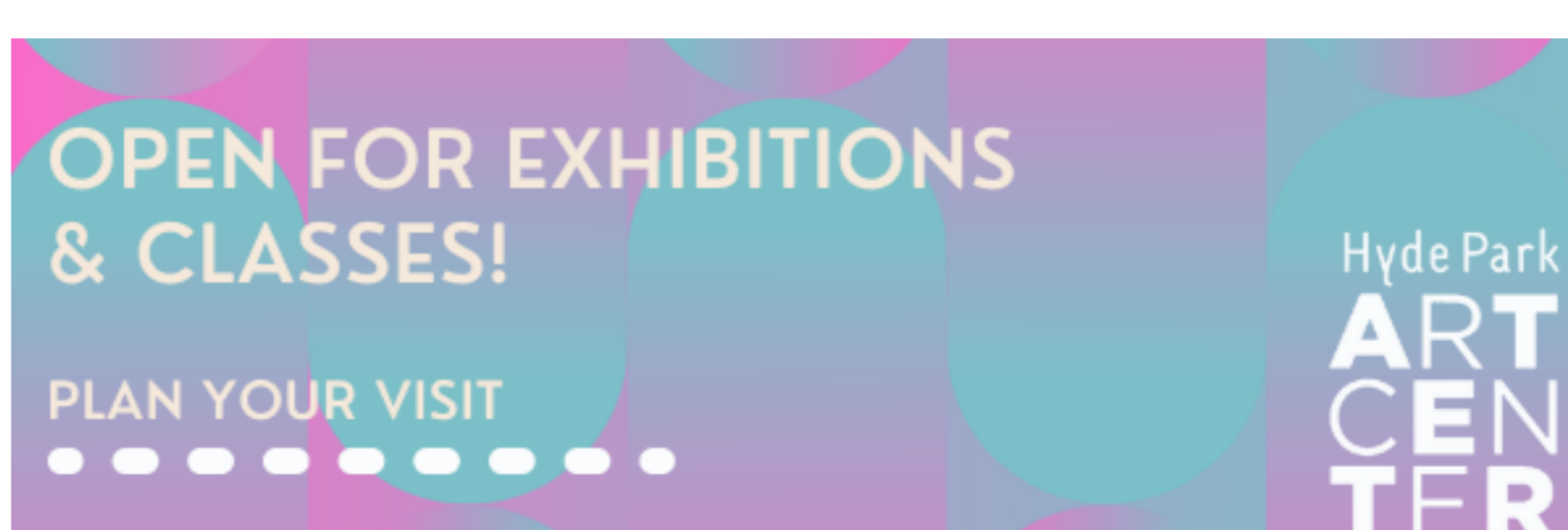


Affirmation and quotes shared by Joyce Butts.



The Teen Programs page on Hyde Park Art Center's website shows plenty of great programs underway. Make sure to bookmark their page for new programs opening up!

[Read More](#)



[Go to the HPAC Calendar](#)

Off The Pews Board of Directors

Thank you very much to the OTP Board for all of their hard work keeping the lights on and the mission moving forward! More information about our board members is available at on the [Our Team page](#).



SHARE Network continues to offer Yoga classes via Zoom. Visit <https://sharenetworkchicago.org/events/> to see upcoming classes.

SHARE...Supporting Healthy Aging Resources & Education

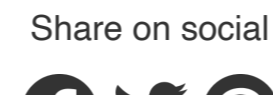
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