

# SPORE NEWS

## Nourishing Cultures of Wellbeing

### Poem

"Blessing for Josie O'Donahue  
~John O'Donahue

On the day when  
The weight deadens  
On your shoulders  
And you stumble,  
May the clay dance  
To balance you.

And when your eyes  
Freeze behind  
The grey window  
And the ghost of loss  
Gets into you,  
May a flock of colours,  
Indigo, red, green,  
And azure blue,  
Come to awaken in you  
A meadow of delight.

When the canvas frays  
In the currach of thought  
And a stain of ocean  
Blackens beneath you  
May there come across the waters  
A path of yellow moonlight  
To bring you safely home.

May the nourishment of the earth  
be yours,  
May the clarity of light be yours,  
May the fluency of the ocean be  
yours  
May the protection of the ancestors  
be yours.

And so may a slow  
Wind work these words  
Of love around you,  
An invisible cloak  
To mind your life



### Nature

I love walking in the woods upon layers of pine needles, cones, branches and moss quilted together on the forest floor. Since she took her first steps, my daughter has helped me become a more observant tracker in the woods, pointing out the micro-evidence at my feet of creatures burrowing, nibbling acorns, or sharpening their nails. Now that she's in first grade I walk daily with Rosie, our golden-doodle.

Rosie sniffs the earth and then bounds off on the chase, nose quivering, stiffened tail, and sometimes returns with a startled, blinking mole or the cold leathery box of a turtle in her mouth to drop at my feet. Other times she finds the skeleton of a fish or remnant of a rubbery duck wing, and rather than sidestep the decomposition in disgust, revels in the decay, rolling to get the stench of fibers into her fur.

This winter the frost on the goldenrod and aster glisten with ice in the morning sunlight. But so far the river is still sliding over



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## Practices

Jane Dutton, professor of business administration and psychology at the University of Michigan: My favorite research-based happiness practice is to be alert to high-quality connections (HQC) that I have with other people during the course of the day. I know that it is a high-quality connection when I sense vitality and aliveness in the interaction, even if it is a stranger. My practice is to notice, savor, elaborate, and remember these HQCs, which are like vitamins that strengthen me from within.

Tim Kasser, professor of psychology at Knox College: Research shows that people who pursue intrinsic goals for personal growth, affiliation, and community feeling report higher well-being than those focused on extrinsic goals for money, image, and status. This is why I spend a lot of my time playing the piano and working in the garden, chatting with my wife and kids, and volunteering, and why I spend as little time as possible shopping or worrying about what other people think about my appearance or status.

(originally published [here](#).)

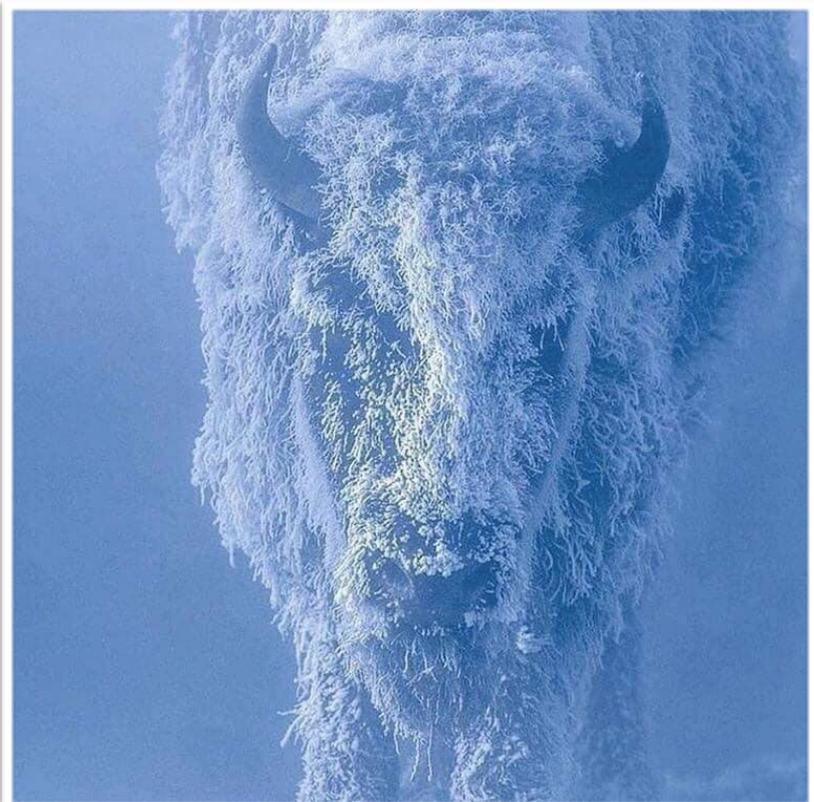
the rocks and sometimes I can still catch a glimpse of the slinking great blue heron fishing in the river or a red tailed hawk circling the meadow.

*“...you must lose your mind to come back to your senses.”*

Meditation lends itself to tracking, says Doniga Markegard, author of *Dawn Again: Tracking and the Wisdom of the Wild*, whom I met recently at a workshop. Both are all about increasing your zones of awareness and decreasing your zones of disturbance, knowing every creature’s movement has a ripple effect.

“And you need empathy to become the animal you are tracking” she says, recalling how she shuffled through a thorny bear tunnel and chewed sweetgrass alongside a doe. “And for that you must lose your mind to come back to your senses.” Like storytelling, tracking is all about understanding ecological relationships, between weather, time and space as we attempt to decipher habits or ruptures in patterns of behavior. This Winter solstice, as the light slowly returns, may we all learn to stay awake and tread gently upon the earth.

Yellowstone National Park, USA. Photo by Tom Murphy.



# FERNWOOD Children's Kindness Retreats

Sunday, January 5 & Saturday, February 8, 1-4pm

Drawing from social emotional learning and mindfulness meditation practices, games, eating and creative movement, these offerings allows kids to unplug from technology and refresh themselves from a busy school year. Each day, we'll share nature-based projects; build attentional skills; and have the chance to practice mindfulness with friends and community in a retreat setting. Experiences include: breathwork, making mood jars, body-emotion maps, gratitude trees, nature mandalas, exploring micro-worlds, trust walks, story-yoga and constructive rest.

*\$40 (Members \$32) plus \$5 for materials.*

Register the Wednesday prior to each retreat.

Open to ages 7-10. Classes limited to 12 participants.



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For more information or to register, visit  
[www.fernwoodbotanical.org](http://www.fernwoodbotanical.org)



# FERNWOOD Contemplative Program: Winter Retreat

Saturday, January 25 (lunar new year) & Saturday, February 22, 1–4pm

One of four annual contemplative programs that reflects a seasonal theme around “Reclaiming Our Nature,” the Winter Retreat draws from the beauty of the snow-covered gardens to awaken our senses. Meditation teacher and Wellbeing scientist, Deirdre Guthrie, guides us through our own inner landscapes of well being as we honor this time of hibernation and reflection. Please dress warmly for a short walk and gentle movement. Lunch is available beforehand in the Café starting at noon.

*\$45 (Fernwood Members \$36)*

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