

SQUEEZE THE DAY



LYNN WALDSMITH PAWLIK

Beauty is in the eyes of a child

One of the nice things about having kids is that you get to relive your childhood in little bits and pieces.

I was thinking about this the other day after I looked at the mess Mother Nature had left on our front lawn. The day before I had spent the better part of two hours raking mounds of leaves into the street. I felt a small sense of accomplishment when the yard finally resumed some semblance of looking neat and tidy.

But here it was the next morning, and you never would have known the difference. The grass was carpeted with even more leaves than there had been the day before. I peered out the window at the two majestic maple trees towering overhead and sighed. They were only about half-done. Multitudes of golden leaves were still to come, not to mention all the reds that lay in waiting in the backyard. My back and arms ached from all that raking. My hand still smarted from the splinter that I got from holding the rake.

But my children had a completely different reaction. "Cool!" my 5-year-old daughter said upon seeing the latest blanket of leaves to cover our tiny parcel of earth. "Let's make a pile!"

And there lies the great divide between adulthood and childhood. We tend to look at things like leaves and automatically think of the work they represent, or worry about how long it will be before they're gone for good. But when you have children running, jumping and burying themselves in mountains of leaves with glee, you can't help but stop and enjoy the gorgeous spectrum of autumn color.

When your kids don inner tubes from the drained kiddie pool and actually plunge into the leaves like it's shimmering, cool water on a sweltering summer's day, you have no choice but to toss aside any cynicism for the moment and enjoy fall's brief beauty unfold.

Funny how simple, everyday things like leaves, or clouds, or bugs can sometimes allow you to see the world through the eyes of a child. The leaves aren't a mess to clean up or an obligation to fulfill. They're just crisp, colorful, irresistible bits of play. When you're a kid, clouds don't get in the way, to borrow a phrase from the classic Joni Mitchell song. They're mysterious and fanciful, they come in wonderful shapes of animals and fairy tale characters. When you're a child, fire flies are magic. Ladybugs are fascinating creatures, not annoying pests that invade your home.

Once we were walking through a parking lot when my daughter suddenly stopped dead in her tracks. "Mooooom," she cooed in pure amazement, "look at the rainbow."

I gazed up, but it was a sunny day and I didn't have the slightest idea what she was talking about. Then I realized she was staring down at the pavement. It was just an oil stain, but she was mesmerized by the blurry watercolor-like rings inside of it.

Something similar happened again recently when my 2-year-old came up to me in the kitchen and kept saying, "Shooting star. Shooting star." I gazed out the window into the darkness, but it was a misty night with heavy clouds and patchy fog. There were no stars in sight.

"Shooting star. Shooting star." Finally I picked her up and held her so we could look out the kitchen window together. "There are no stars out tonight Erin. See?"

Then she pointed her finger at the street light in the distance. "Right there," she whispered in awe. "Shooting star."

I looked again. The combination of the haze outside and condensation on the window made the street light appear like a beautiful star radiating streams of light.

"Wow, you're right Erin." I told her. "It is a shooting star."

Sure, raking leaves is a royal pain. But at least I can occasionally return to the wonder years through the eyes of my children and appreciate the splendor of fall.

Winter's coming soon. Maybe they'll help me appreciate snow...

Lynn Waldsmith Pawlik is a freelance writer who lives with her husband and two children in Plymouth. You can e-mail her at pawliwald@mediano.net.

SweetDreamzzz deliver holiday cheer



Treats from Santa: Santa Claus moved from room to room giving candy to Jahaziel Murillo and all of the students at Higgins Elementary in southwest Detroit.

SweetDreamzzz Detroit volunteers delivered holiday packages sealed with a bow and a holiday wish on Tuesday to 3,500 grade school children in nine Detroit schools. From 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., more than 600 volunteers hosted pizza parties at seven of the schools to celebrate the season and share gifts.

Those who donated items include: Kmart Corp., Mystic Medical Equipment, Procter & Gamble, Adrian Owens, Papa John's Pizza of Farmington and Wisom, Backi Enlok, author of "Bounce and the Stream of Life," J.H. Bennet and Morley Candy Company.

SweetDreamzzz is a nonprofit charity providing bedtime essentials for a good night's rest to Detroit grade school children in preparation for classroom learning. To date, more than 7,000 children have received holiday packages containing sleeping bags, socks, hats, mittens and other personal items.



Just right: Flavio Lopez tries on his brand new hat, one of the gifts he received from the many volunteers of SweetDreamzzz.



Face painting: SweetDreamzzz volunteer Janet Kelmigian paints a holiday design on Luis Gallardo's face. Kelmigian is a resident of Farmington Hills.



Elf work: Most of the time, Dana Velzy is a student at Dunchel Middle School in Farmington Hills but on Tuesday she was Bell, one of Santa's elves. One of her jobs was to pass out bags of gifts to Higgins Elementary School students.

Author helps others navigate spiritual journey

BY KIMBERLY A. MORTSON
STAFF WRITER
kmortson@oe.homecomm.net



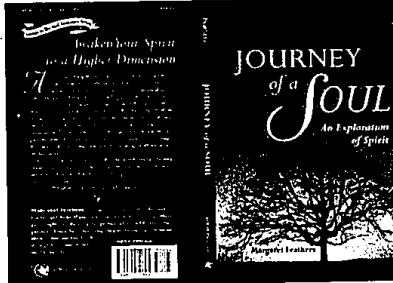
Margaret Feathers

Margaret Feathers is certain things happen for a reason. Not because she made them happen, but because she finally realized how to listen to her inner voice... to let things happen naturally.

"I just surrendered and let go," said Feathers whose book, *Journey of a Soul: An Exploration of Spirit* was recently published by J&M Publishing of Plymouth.

"The words were just given to me by way of divine guidance throughout the whole writing process. I never visualized I could write a book but I did."

A licensed occupational therapist at Providence Hospital, the Plymouth resident took three months leave of absence in 1999 to dedicate her time to writing. The result, she says, was something bigger than she ever expected. *Journey of a Soul* takes the hand of



the reader and guides them through a better understanding of a higher self than the one they trust physically.

"I always had this intuitive feeling that there was something bigger out there than myself. It took me time to get used to it and now I know where it comes from and how to make sense of it. I always struggled with that and went the other way to an extent," said

Feathers who describes her upbringing as "strict Catholic" in a family where she was one of 12 siblings.

Although her childhood was happy she says in her book that at times it was hard for her parents to share "special times" individually when their were so many children to divide their attention between. As an adult, she married into a relationship that was

Exploring the spirit: *Journey of a Soul* was written by Plymouth resident Margaret Feathers.

"happy and blissful" but ended due to a lack of nurturing. She goes on to say that a severe medical condition suffered by her husband added additional stress and pressure to their relationship — eventually leading to divorce.

Turning point

The catalyst for the change in her life emotionally, physically and spiritually came when she finally succumbed to the pain she felt for years and cried out for help. She says "He," answered her through the voice of a friend who was teaching an extended learning class. She was given the assignment to write very honest and straightforward letters, to all the people she harbored anger toward, then burn them so nothing remained.

The exercise opened the flood gates to Feathers' emotions. To this day she says know one could know the power of the exercise unless they do it themselves. She said she came to feel a strong sense of relief, peace, power, comfort and maybe most importantly, forgiveness.

From that point on, the Plymouth woman's life has been dramatically different. The journey she has taken has

Lynch featured in Town Hall literary lecture series



Thomas Lynch

The Livonia Town Hall Lecture series for the 2002 season starts in January with an appearance by guest speaker Thomas Lynch.

Possibly the most celebrated funeral director in America, Lynch is the author of three collections of poems, *Skating with Heather Grace*, *Grimalkin & Other Poems and Still Life in Milford*. He has also authored two books of essays *The Undertaking* and his most recent work *Bodies At Motion*

and *At Rest*. *The Undertaking* won an American Book Award and was a finalist for the National Book Award.

Lynch describes his work as the "literary and mortuary arts." The Milford lecturer series will appear 10:30 a.m. Jan. 16. Copies of his book will be on sale before and after the lecture.

Conclusion

The last of the professional speakers to appear during the 38th season of the lecture series is Elliot Engel, a scholar and performer — he will give the audience new insights into the backgrounds, lives and accompaniments of the great masters of English and American literature.

Engel earned his bachelor's at Indi-



Elliot Engel

ana University and his masters and doctorate as a Woodrow Wilson Fellow at UCLA. While there, he won the University's Outstanding Teacher Award. He is presently at North Carolina State University. The books he authored have been published by both British and American presses, and his articles have appeared in numerous magazines, including *Newsweek*.

He presents several lively discussions about literary notables titled:

- The Dickens Nobody Knows
- The Brilliant and Bizarre Brontes
- The Tortured Genius of Edgar Allan Poe
- Scarlet Fever: The Greatness of Gone With the Wind
- How William Became Shakespeare
- Myth Emily Dickinson

Engel will lecture 10:30 a.m. Wednesday, March 20. Both lecturers will appear at the St. Mary Cultural Center, 18100 Merriman Road, Livonia.

There are a variety of ticket and luncheon options available. Contact Emily Stankus, (734) 420-0383. The Livonia Town Hall is a non-profit organization that supports the Livonia Symphony Society and other Livonia charities.