



CENTRE COUNTY PREVENTION COALITION
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Laura Adams teaches art at State College Friends School and Centre Learning Community Charter School. This weekly column, published on Wednesdays, is a collaboration of Centre County *Communities That Care* serving Bald Eagle, Bellefonte, Penns Valley, and Philipsburg-Osceola Area School Districts, and Care Partnership: Centre Region *Communities That Care* serving the State College Area School District.

Spoken by grandmas and gurus alike, in some way we have all been told to *stop and smell the roses*. From an artist's point of view, it is important to SEE them too! No matter where you live or where your travels take you this summer, you can inspire the artist in yourself or your child by taking a closer look at what is all around you. For a simple and inexpensive exploration of the visual arts, just open your eyes to a little adventure!

Lie down in the grass and look at those clouds (chances are we'll have a few in Happy Valley) – describe what you see, talk about their shapes and the shapes you see between the clouds. Discuss the colors you see – usually not just white on a single shade of blue.

Go off the beaten path. Find a group of rural mailboxes on a dirt road or a flower garden in Granny's back yard. Check out one of my favorite spots - the garden and pond near Penn State's University House. Barely a walk from downtown State College, this little paradise is nestled between PSU's engineering buildings – a location that seems to highlight its natural beauty.

Follow the beaten path. Our entire region boasts fantastic parks and you'll find an extensive bike path throughout the State College area (crpr.centreconnect.org/parks). Visit these or one of the region's countless other attractions, festivals, or museums. Explore your own neighborhood or local area – the key is to really see something interesting in your surroundings.

Pack a bag. Take camera, sketchbook, clipboard, pencils, colored pencils, crayons, watercolors, cups, paintbrushes, a big Ziploc bag, rags – anything that seems portable and fun - and perhaps something comfy to sit on.

Observe nature's plants, animals, rocks and wonders. Take in the sunrise, sunset, man-made structures or a bubbling brook. Sit down on a bench, wall, or patch of grass and look at old and new buildings, windows, trees - or whatever catches your eye.

Find something fascinating or something ordinary, but this time take a closer look (or encourage your youngsters to do so) and really SEE it. Focus on a detail or on the bigger picture. Look at the shapes, colors, and juxtaposition of things - old and new, big and small, or dark and light.

Break out the art supplies. Make many sketches or one detailed picture. Add color if you wish. With a little water in a cup (from a water bottle or a creek), you can even have the fun of watercolor painting right in the great outdoors! Write some notes or start a journal.

When you have had enough art exploring for the day, put your wet stuff (paint, brushes, etc.) in your big Ziploc, clean up your spot, and head home. Save a little time for your paintings to dry - and to stop and see the “roses” on your return trip!