



# The Mountain Matters

October 1997



The Mountain Retreat & Learning Center, Inc.

## Board of Friends Created Holds Initial Meeting

With much excitement, some 30 members of the mountain's Board of Friends met August 29-31 to determine how they can assist in raising more funds to support the new Strategic Plan. This meeting was in conjunction with the MR&LC's Board of Trustees quarterly meeting, and will occur annually with the August meeting. Enthusiasm built as individuals shared memories and dreams for the mountain, made suggestions on how to achieve those dreams, and outlined a job description for their group.

This initial Board of Friends was recruited by Development Director, Larry Wheeler, who indicated that another 20 or so members are still being sought. He said the goal is to have members dispersed geographically throughout the Southeast and other places where we either have or want to develop a following.

Those attending the weekend gathering included Neal Andreas, Marty Beech, Sally Bellamy, Don Chery, Oddy Curtisa, Harry & Rene Donavan, Phil & Betty Green, Jake Haun, Anne Heath, Anne Hornberger, Walt & Marcia Jenison, Margaret & Harold Johnson, Carole Light, Jim & Bobbie Littlefield, Don & Sue Male, Juanita Polk, Phil & Linda Sterner, Mo Wheeler, Randy Whitt, John & Jerri Wood, and Suzanne Wright.

Other members who could not attend, but will be asked to participate in a similar February 27-March 1 meeting, include Tom & Sybil Ackerman, Sue Boyce, Paul Clipp, Roger Comstock, Margaret & Bud Evans, Allie Gooding, Nancy Heath, Bob Hornberger, Susan Kimball, Wally & Lynn Klarman, Myrtle & Art Lockwood, Christine Lucas, Liz McMaster, Walt Firie, Bonnie Sheppard & Bill Spurgin, Ellen Stewart, and Frony Ward. They will join others being recruited later this fall.

In commenting on the meeting, Larry said: "It was exciting and uplifting to have these folks here and to see their willingness to help the mountain as it strives to meet the many goals of the Strategic Plan! I am really looking forward to working with them."



## Director's Column:

Milestones! ("important events in one's history") - we've had a summer full of them. Our first Milestone is one of organization. Our name change is official: we are incorporated as The Mountain Retreat & Learning Center. And we have a new "educational" Corporation, the Milestone Learning Center, giving us the opportunity to venture forth in places not previously possible because of our exclusively religious classification. Appreciation goes out to Katherine Barnes, an attorney in Charlotte, NC who did all the legal work, pro bono.

Our second Milestone - Saturday, August 30th, we turned the switches and began pumping water from our new, State approved well. A huge thanks to Ian Denham & Buddy Brown for their skills and energies in making this most important change a reality.

A third Milestone - a great summer camp season. Under the very capable, caring leadership of Karen Kleiber, Sarah Walls and the incredible counselors, our youth enjoyed safe, enriching and fun-filled summer experiences. And what's more exciting (and another Milestone), Karen has joined the staff as full-time Youth Programs Director and Sarah as full-time Director for Young Adult and Womens' Programs.

Another "important event in one's history" is the return of Larry Wheeler to the staff as our Development Director. He brings with him the love of this place, excellent skills in fund raising, sincere interest in mountain members and a deep commitment to the vision and the future of the mountain as it is laid out in our Strategic Vision Plan.

Of course, whether it's name changes, new wells, youth programs or development efforts, it takes a real team effort at the mountain to make it all work—Marketing and Programs with Shelley Denham's leadership and the skills of Susan Smith, Pam Bachman, Karla Stevens, Jack & Maria Loveless—the Guest Services office with Rebecca Sunshine, Holly Lian, and part-time Gillian Denham & Hilary Smith—Housekeeping with Elleen McKinney's leadership and the energies of Ed Wharton & Glenn Guffey—Food Service with KJ Frelin's leadership and the interests and skills of Mark Walker, Adam Laisewski & Jason Jolley—the competencies of the administrative folks, Neal Resch, Doug Hotch, Jane Warth, Stephen Rigg & Suzanne Whitehead and the enthusiastic efforts of Robert E. Smith as Director of Human Resources & Volunteers. All of these people make the difference that IS the mountain.

On a final note, a Milestone of sorts—Jane and I endorse wholeheartedly the vision for this place; after 7 years here, we have committed to another seven and in that spirit, have decided to improve the "livability" of the Director's home. We have undertaken a major remodeling with our own funds, improving our living situation now and leaving it as a gift to the mountain when we leave. These are exciting times—be a part of it! Please read this Mountain Matters, cover to cover—give us a call or drop us a note if you have any comments. Also, join us for one or more of our quality programs throughout the year. Get to know our wonderful staff. Remember, this is your mountain—come for the experience, the difference, the potential!

Tom

# Youth Programming Reaches New Heights!

## Karen Kleiber

### Youth Programs Director

first came to *the mountain* in 1982 as a camper. After spending 7 summers as a camper, Karen was an ASCENDER in 1989, and then a cabin counselor for three consecutive summers. After taking a couple summers off during college, Karen returned in the summer of 1995, following graduation from Swarthmore College, to be one of the ASCENDER mentors. In 1996 she helped to expand and re-design the Counselor-In-Training (CIT) program and was CIT mentor. During the summer of 1997, Karen served as one of the Youth Camp Directors. She moved to *the mountain* in May 1997 from Washington DC, where she was teaching.



## Quotes from 1997 mountaincampers

- ☺ "There is such a spirit of community and friendship at *the mountain* that all of my usual barriers I place between myself and the world disappear as if they never existed."
- ☺ "It is an awesome place. I love the way it is run and the attitudes of everyone."



☺ "It is the people that form the web of *the mountain* and the acceptance of all that makes this place great!"

☺ "It is the highlight of my year."

## 1998 mountaincamp Dates

- June 13 - July 18 ASCENDER (Rising 11-12th grades)
- June 13 - Aug. 1 Counselor-In-Training (Rising 12th through 1998 graduates)
- June 21 - July 4 Junior High (Rising 7-9th grades)
- July 5 - July 18 Elementary (Rising 3-6th grades)
- July 5 - July 18 Work & Adventure (Rising 8-12th grades)
- July 19 - Aug. 1 Senior High (Rising 10th through 1998 graduates)
- Aug. 2 - Aug. 8 Sr. HI Leadership School for Social Justice (Rising 10th through 1998 graduates)
- Aug. 2 - Aug. 8 First Time Out Camp (Rising 1-3rd grades)

**Register Early!! Camps fill quickly!**

\$150 Non-refundable deposit due upon registration

ASCENDER and CIT Application deadline is February 15th

Call for a brochure if you're not on the *mountaincamp* mail list (available in Mid-October)

## Youth Programs Update

*The following comments are excerpted from Karen Kleiber's report to the MR&LC Board in August.*

*the mountain* is in the process of "growing and becoming," and I am excited to be a part of it as the Youth Programs Director. Youth programming at *the mountain* has always been successful due to its respect for and dedication to youth. This year we have renewed and energized our commitment to quality youth programming. This is exemplified by the fact that I have been hired as a full-time year-round staff person dedicated solely to creating and implementing youth programs. I am responsible for *mountaincamp*, Conferences, and any and all youth activities which are part of other programs, such as as congregational retreats and the Thanksgiving members' weekend. We are also hoping to establish educational and school programming in the near future.

Our commitment and ability to work with youth is clearly demonstrated by the very successful camps this past summer. Our camps were virtually 100% accident free, with only some minor health concerns which could not have been prevented by our staff. I believe that we have come a long way in assuring safety, and limiting *the mountain's* liability. Our goals now are focused on improving a system that already works.

While I am working on improving all aspects of youth programming, I know that what we give to youth goes far beyond our systems and procedures. Coming to *the mountain* offers children a truly safe space. Our incredibly caring staff ensured that two sisters, campers here in the middle of their parents' difficult divorce, found sanctuary and were re-energized when they returned home. Through camperships we make sure that those who might not otherwise come to camp are able to do so. This summer we enabled a young woman living in a children's home to attend both the ASCENDER and Senior High camp programs, and we know that she is forever strengthened by this experience.

In our work with youth, I believe that not only do we fulfill *the mountain's* mission statement by energizing youth to work for positive change, but we, the staff, actually work directly for positive change. I am here today because I see there is opportunity to do meaningful work as part of the *mountain's* vision. I, myself, have been forever changed by the gifts which *the mountain* has given me in my 13 summers here. I know that in many ways miracles happen for youth at *the mountain* and that the confidence kids gain here can be truly life transforming.



*We drink from wells we did not dig. We are warmed by fires we did not build.  
The Mountain exists because of its supporters!!*

## *Lodge Rooms Named*

Thanksgiving 1996

### **IN LOVING MEMORY THE Ed Heath Room**

Ellen Heath, gave her \$10,000 Promissory Note to name Room #7 in honor of her son Ed Heath, who died in 1996. Ed served on the staff

of the mountain in various capacities including Interim Director. Ellen's family connections to the mountain are deep: daughter Nancy served as Nature Director and is married to current Development Director, Larry Wheeler. Ellen's granddaughter, Karen Kleiber is our Youth Programs Director. Also, as part of that gift, the Great Room of the Lodge now has its very own screen for showing slides and movies! (Note: Ellen died on Friday, October 3rd in her home in Columbia, SC.)

At the same time, the Donavon family (Harry, Rene, and Heather) with a \$10,000 gift allowed us to name room #10 in their honor. The Donavons, formerly of Atlanta, reside in the Dallas Metroplex; they are former Treasurers of the mountain and Rene was instrumental in starting the Elderhostel Program.

### **THE Donavon Room Heather, Rene and Harry**

Summer 1997

During their summer congregational retreat at the mountain, members of the **Birmingham Unitarian Church-Michigan** completed a \$10,000 pledge begun in 1993 and will now see room #11 carry their name on the door. Thirty-five different individuals or couples combined to make it all happen.

Thank you to all who have donated Lodge Rooms!!!  
AND, if you haven't considered it yet, there are still three rooms available.

## *Wish List*

We always are on the lookout for a variety of items which will enable us to offer a better experience to our guests or help our staff to better perform their jobs. Here's our current list:

- Ⓞ Adult & Children's videos and books
- Ⓞ \$3 to purchase a wheel chair
- Ⓞ Golf Cart - for Housekeeping and guest transport
- Ⓞ Computers & Printers -Please think of us when upgrading— call Jane Warth (Ext. 222) to discuss specifics.



## *New Patron Members (\$5,000 +)*

Randy Whitt, Charlotte, NC  
Suzanne Wright, Cumming, GA

## *New Life Members (\$1,600 - \$2,000 +)*

Tom Kondratiek, Macon, GA  
Al Cotton, Avondale Estates, GA  
Krista & Todd Meinersmann, Atlanta, GA  
Joy & Rich McConnell, St. Louis, MO  
Randy & Susie Safford, Bloomfield Hills, MI  
Walt & Sara Johnson, Southfield, MI  
Dan Redmond & Sara Smith Redmond, Lathrup Village, MI  
Donna Schmitt, Birmingham, MI  
Barbara Wood, Bloomfield Hills, MI  
Jim Colby, Fosters, AL  
Len Johnson, Huntington Woods, MI  
John & Kathy Bohstedt, Knoxville, TN

## *Special Gifts*

Sally Bellamy - \$10,000 for Young Adult/Youth Programming  
Sarah Anderson & Alan Bellamy - Birthday Gift for their mother, Sally Bellamy  
Jim & Bobbie Littlefield - \$6,000  
Don Cherry and son, Anthony, 100 hrs Marketing Consulting  
Oddy Curtiss - Annual Sustaining Life Member gift  
Board of Friends - \$2,500 to produce new mountain video  
John Vacher - Rewiring Director's Home  
Tom & Jane Warth - \$25,000 to remodel Director's home

## *Alumni Campaign Provides New Donors*

A special mailing to people who have visited the mountain, but not previously made a donation to support its programs, facilities and services has yielded over \$2500. And they're still coming in. Thank you!

## *1997 Year End Donations*

It's not too early to think about your end of the year tax donations. Please include the mountain in your plans and help to support our vision. Immediate uses for such donations are the lower REC Hall (it will be done by Thanksgiving!), the new water system, a new dishwasher, etc. If you have questions, please contact Larry.

## *Development Director Comments*

I am delighted to return to the mountain as Development Director. My love for and devotion to the mountain have never changed. What this position will enable me to do is be in contact with all of you who have shown your own commitment to this wonderful place. I'm going to be in contact with the membership of the mountain, but don't wait for me to call you; pick up the phone and call me -- in Atlanta at (404) 378-9537 and here at the mountain at (704) 526-5838, x230. Both places have voice mail. My e-mail address is elwheeler@aol.com. Let me know what your thoughts are about the mountain and how you might be willing to help. I look forward to talking with you, or better yet, to see you on top of our beloved mountain!

## REFUEL

(Residential Education For Unique Experiential Learning) is a program based on a concept that has evolved for many years here at *the mountain*. It is a five month residency for young adults who are unclear what the next step in their lives should be. The purpose of *REFUEL* is to create a safe and supportive environment for individuals to foster their interests and talents while broadening their skills and understanding. *REFUEL* participants will maintain a safe environment by committing to a drug and alcohol free lifestyle and by living in community with one another. This "safe space" that we often talk about at *the mountain* is essential for the young adults in the program to recognize and work toward their own potential.

*REFUEL* will be shaped around individual participants' interests. There are several basic components of the program, including apprenticeships, community service, informal academics, high adventure, leadership training and guidance services. We are still accepting applications for a January start date. Please call Sarah Walls on Ext. 241 for more information.

### About Sarah - *REFUEL* Mentor

#### & Young Adult and Women's Programs Director

Sarah Walls started full time work at *the mountain* in May, 1997. She has been part of youth camp since 1989 and has been in leadership roles for the past two summers, including being Co-Director this past summer. A graduate of Guilford College, Sarah has a degree in Religious Studies and has completed extensive work in Women's Studies and Peace & Conflict Studies.



## The Mission of The Mountain Retreat & Learning Center

*is to embrace the diversities of  
life, creating an environment  
to energize people to work  
for positive change.*



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Non Profit Organization  
Bulk Rate  
U.S. Postage Paid  
Highlands, NC  
Permit No. 46



To Charter Life Members . . .

Easter Weekend (April 10-12, 1998) has been set aside  
as a special weekend just for you.

Mark your calendar and watch for a special mailing!