



The Mountain Matters

THE MOUNTAIN RETREAT & LEARNING CENTER, INC.



December 1998



the mountain experience:

"For us all the week was great physically, emotionally and in human spirit. I feel we are all leaving with an uplifted feeling about ourselves and the world outside the mountain." (Elderhostel)

"The staff are generous people who pursue the ideal of inclusivity and we benefit by it." (Elderhostel)

"This is the one place I come for renewal." (Native American Culture Retreat)

"This is a very special, sacred place. Thanks so much for appreciating and welcoming diversity." (Gay Spirit Vision)

"The staff comes from such a heart space and we are changed because of it." (Atlanta Unity Women's Retreat)

"Thanks for creating a beautiful atmosphere up here. It is a wonderful place to get away and be in community with others." (Presbyterian Student Center Retreat)

"It is difficult to put the mountain experience into words - full would be the closest as in delightful, thankful." (Gainesville, Florida, UU Congregational Retreat)

"Thank you - I brought with me more personal baggage than I could handle, much less expose. But here I was able to share because of the atmosphere of compatibility, mature men with common experiences and the mountain's openness." (Prime-Time Connections)

"We want to thank you again for the refuge you are creating for our UU kids. The new walkway should improve accessibility for all ... When our son returns from camp he is rested & relaxed. It is clear that he has been treated with sensitivity and respect. It is difficult to find a similar environment for our son in this busy metropolitan area." (Summer camper parents)

"Thank you for giving ME the opportunity to experience one of the richest, most intense weeks of my life. Can you imagine what it is like, a whole week with intense, committed, intelligent people? That experience is life changing." (A Lay Leadership School Participant)

"I'm interested in a Patron Life Membership as I consider your organization pivotal in my acceptance and tenure in college and subsequent career success." (A former mountain staff member)

Mountain Views

Tom Warth, Executive Director

"No never, ever will we be together quite like this again, see these faces, hear these voices, live our lives again - so take each moment as a gift ... and give it back again."

These are words sung by the Atlanta Gay Men's Chorus this past weekend - 120 voices singing to the young social activists here for LEAP (Leadership Ethical Action Project) How exciting that we have a facility that can house 150 people in November, a performing hall like the Tree House that a choir of this reputation finds "one of the best that we have to sing in," and a mission of diversity that brings together two groups such as these - both groups working for positive change.

This is our last *The Mountain Matters* of the year and what better way to tell you "**the mountain DOES matter!**" than to share with you a few of the hundreds of stories of transformation and change we have heard throughout this past year.

Surely these testimonials speak to why we continue to invest in **the mountain** - \$2,600,000 in physical plant, employ 31 year round staff, create safe space - **TO FULFILL OUR MISSION**, "to embrace the diversity of life, creating an environment to energize people to work for positive change." There is nothing passive about this mission. It's activist - it's full of verbs - embracing, creating, energizing, working. This is why we build and grow, so that we can do the work. We have so much to be proud of and to appreciate.

As we approach this holiday season I think the best way for me to describe my feelings about this year, our programs, this place, staff, Trustees, members, friends and supporters comes from the hymn, *For All That is Our Life*, words by Bruce Findlow, found in our UU Hymnbook. "For all that is our life, we sing our thanks and praise; for all life is a gift which we are called to use to build the common good ... and make our own days glad."

My heart and days are full and the gifts we receive are many! Have a happy and healthy holiday season - take care of one another and in so doing make our own - and other's - days glad!

Tom

L:EAP!

Leadership: Ethical Action Project!

"This weekend exceeded all my expectations.... It fulfilled my need for involving myself in something beyond my own realm of self-consciousness... I feel blessed to be part of it. I loved the Gay Men's choir and am so thankful that that experience was made possible."

This is a comment from one of our L: EAP! participants after our November 13-15 weekend, the second of a series of many sessions the Asheville group will have over the next 18 months both at The Mountain and in their home community. Comprised of students from the Friends and Unitarian Universalist congregations, the youth from Asheville have embarked on the first L: EAP! endeavor - and their energy and commitment is surpassing even our ambitious expectations!

L: EAP! is one of Milestone Learning Center's program models. It is a unique training for senior high school students designed to:

- Create partnerships between diverse youth groups.
- Build skills and knowledge in the areas of ethical leadership and social justice activism.
- Result in a project intended to create positive change in their local community and a product that will serve as a tool for implementing the project and/or documentation of their work.

In November, distinguished faculty members Elsie Williams (Teaching Tolerance Editor for Southern Poverty Law Center) Ron Lambé (Asheville Community Activist) and Lee Knight (Civil Rights Activist and Musician) served the youth.

Workshops focused on understanding discrimination, Networking skills and Appalachian Culture. The energy in the workshops was palpable! And as Tom mentioned in his article, The Atlanta Gay Men's Chorus was also on site. They invited L: EAP! participants into one of their sessions - and

director David Puckett was so moved by the students that he provided an impromptu workshop in between rehearsals! Some youth comments: "The Chorus was wonderful." "The idea that 100+ plus gay men can be so courageous inspired me." "I've never been around so many gay men before - they were so warm and friendly - it was awesome!"

We are moved and impressed by the determination of these young people to serve one another and their community. We expressed our appreciation for their willingness to embark on this 18-month project, and one of them responded: "You have it backwards. We thank you for helping us to learn how to become empowered to make a difference - we would be jumping out of windows by now out of frustration if you hadn't come along with this program."

Laurel Amabile is the D.R.E. of the UU Congregation of Asheville and we can't imagine a more supportive, committed coordinator. Her involvement is critical, for most of the work will be taking place in the community itself. Laurel is the facilitator of communications between the UU and Friends advisors and the driving force behind the continuing momentum necessary to accomplish the goals. She would tell you she couldn't do it all without the support of her minister, Maureen Kiloran, and the other members of her congregation - particularly the parents of the youth.

As with several of our Milestone programs, we have a strong commitment to obtain funding for all or most of the L: EAP! expenses so that there are no financial barriers to participation. If you have questions or ideas, please call Shelley Denham at extension 224.

The Mission of Milestone Learning Center, Inc.

... to invite people of all ages to actively practice ethical behavior in their pursuit of socioeconomic justice in local, community and worldwide endeavors.



L:EAP! Group with Laurel Amabile - September 1998



Senior High Leadership School 1998 on Meditation Rock

On the job in Nashville with Refuel

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A major component of the REFUEL program is community service. Two of our service projects this fall have involved working on homes. We've literally worked from the bottom to the top, the floor to the roof! In September, we spent several days at the **Hinton Rural Life Center**, in Hayesville, NC. The Hinton Center sponsors work trips for youth and adults in local areas, especially focused on renovating and building homes for low income families. At our work site in Murphy, we nailed down underflooring and worked in the yard. Planting grass seed in the pouring rain and trying to figure out how to cut the underflooring for the bathroom provided some comical moments for our group!

This past spring, a major tornado hit Nashville, TN and the disaster relief effort is still going on. Hundreds of homes have yet to be repaired throughout the area. Coordinating with the **Interfaith Disaster Response** organization, the REFUEL group worked on Mr. Wilson's farm house, putting on a new tin roof. IDR struggles to find volunteers and funds now that it is six months after the tornado and "old news." Fortunately, Channel 5 News picked up on the need for continued publicity and filmed IDR and the REFUEL group at Mr. Wilson's house. In addition to the caring guidance of IDR, we were grateful for the warm hospitality of **First Unitarian Universalist Church of Nashville**, where we stayed in the Religious Education Building.

Community involvement is a truly meaningful element of the REFUEL program; it allows us to help with specific tasks and build relationships that provide insight into ourselves and others.

REFUEL Admissions Update

Structural changes have been made to the REFUEL program format based on what we've learned from running two classes as well as feedback from our constituents. The most significant change is that REFUEL will run one program per year in the fall semester with a target number of eight to twelve students. For more information, please call Sarah Walls at extension 241.



Mountain Staff and REFUEL renovating Cabin 12

Senior High Leadership School for Social Justice

SHLS is a program for high school students to develop skills for community action. This past summer, 14 youth attended **Leadership School**. Each one of these students had a strong desire to learn how to be more effective, so that they could individually and collectively work for positive change.

It was a privilege to work with this group. Their energy was inspiring, their vision breathtaking. It was clear by the end of the week that this was a truly moving experience for everyone involved – faculty, staff and participants. But it has been in the months following that we've learned the true impact of this program. Since August, students have been in touch to tell us what they're up to—and what they're "up to" is impressive. Some examples: participating in an AIDS Walk, filling a leadership position in a liberal religious coalition, working in a multifaith social action group, becoming more active in

church and doing many hours of community service.

In support of their personal commitment to justice work, **Leadership School** empowers young people to work hard in their communities. It provides a support system of youth and adults who can communicate and sustain each other in the challenges and triumphs of working for social change.

Because of expanding interest and the visible impact of **Leadership School**, we will be developing different modules for already formed youth groups (both congregational and secular). The possibilities will include on and off site programs of varying lengths. Depending on the needs and interests of each group, staff will tailor programs around a particular focus, such as racism, tools for social action, sexism and homophobia. For more information, please call Sarah Walls at extension 241.



ONLY A FEW DAYS LEFT UNTIL ...

- An Appalachian Christmas, December 23-26
- New Year's in the Blue Ridge, December 30 - January 3

What a great place to be for the holidays. Come for one or both and even stay in between. **the mountain** has often proved to be a magical place for the holidays. Just ask those that were here the New Year's Eve when the rain turned into big snow flakes precisely at midnight.

Folk singer and storyteller **Lee Knight** and host **Neal Andreae** will lead wreath making, songs, stories, caroling at the hospital, hikes, fireside conversations and some Christmas cheer. Join *The Mountain Quartet* for a moving Christmas Eve service, and participate in the Appalachian gift exchange.

In between the two holidays will be a quieter time but what a marvelous place to be for some reading, fireside sitting and perhaps some exploring of the area on your own or with a few others.

New Year's arrives with **George and Elizabeth Ellison** here to help you experience natural and geologic history, wildlife observation and artistic expression. New Year's eve brings a candlelight dinner, party, New Year's Day brunch, a *Mountain Quartet* concert, hikes and more.

Call **the mountain** office for more details and to register!

Slide & Ski

DOWNHILL SKIING... DOWNHILL TUBING
(January 8 - 10, and January 22 - 24)

While it may not snow all that much at **the mountain**, it's often cold enough for our two closest ski areas to make snow — Scaly Mountain (4 miles away) and Sky Valley (7 miles away). Both have night skiing, too, and this year, for the first time, Scaly Mountain has added tubing. In your own covered inner tube with a seat, the tow pulls you to the top and you ride down the slope. No equipment to buy, no expertise needed, all ages can do it.

What a great way to add on to the fun of a weekend at **the mountain**. Bring the whole family and either go to the slopes for all day or combine a day of hiking with an evening at the slopes.

We've set up two January weekends that have just this flavor:

January 8 - 10

January 22 - 24

(Friday Dinner through Sunday Lunch)

Special low prices: Adults \$75, Youth age 4 to 11 \$10, Youth age 12 to 17 \$25



DID YOU KNOW?

- ❶ **the mountain** is open 365 days a year and the kitchen provides meals every one of those days.
- ❷ All living quarters and public buildings are insulated and heated.
- ❸ **the mountain** doesn't get that much snow and even if it does, we have a plow for our truck and the state does a great job plowing the main roads.
- ❹ Hiking and crystal clear skies in the winter months make for very dramatic views. There's no foliage on the trees and the weather is often clear and crisp.
- ❺ The creeks and rivers usually have more water.
- ❻ There are less visitors to the area AND at **the mountain** so things are more laid back. It's a great time to get to know the staff.
- ❼ Fires are usually burning in the Lodge Great Room and in the Lower Rec Hall — comfortable places to sit and talk or read.

Dates:

- | | |
|-------------------|---|
| Soon — | Mountaincamp registrations (the camps fill up quickly - Need a brochure? Call The Mountain) |
| Late Jan | Mountain Program Calendar mailed (Winter/Spring/Summer) |
| May 28-31 | Members and Donors Weekend/20th Annual Meeting |
| July 11-7 | Religious Education Week |
| July 25-31 | Leadership School |
| Sept. 3-6 | Labor Day Weekend — 20th Anniversary Celebration |

A Quartet CD!

It's finally happened! Through the generosity of *the mountain* members, Bob and Anne Hornberger's "seed money", *The Mountain Quartet* has just completed the recording of their first CD! Life Member David Jackson (Cincinnati, OH) brought fellow musician and recording engineer Mike Sharfe to *the mountain* on October 31. Mike and David recorded a "live" concert that night as the Quartet sang to an audience of Trustees, staff and other guests. In the next 3 days they taped over 20 pieces in 3 sessions, and also gave the Quartet the opportunity to make a quality tape of one of their worship services. From all these numbers, approximately 16 will be selected for the CD. Many thanks to Mike and David, whose enthusiasm, honesty and encouragement provided the tools for the Quartet to overcome any tensions caused by logistics, schedules, "froggy" throats and nervousness! It was an unforgettable experience.

But this CD is intended to be far more than a way for Jane, Tom, Shelley and Ian "make a joyful noise". It underscores a firm belief in the power of music to promote the mission of *the mountain* - to embrace the diversity of life, creating an environment to energize people to work for positive change. Wherever there has been activism, passion, grieving, celebrating, there has been music - to motivate, inspire, heal, and affirm. The commitment to diversity has required the Quartet to transcend some personal biases in order to embrace pieces that may not reflect their own theology: They have learned to reclaim music by "reframing" it. Bob Hornberger put it best when he said:

"I'm not what you'd call a 'spiritual' person, and wasn't comfortable with a lot of traditional religious music. But the Quartet has expanded my vision because they share the stories, the histories of their songs. I was missing out on a lot. The reason this

music moves me so much is because it exemplifies the ideals of *the mountain*. The whole organization is dedicated to these ideals and the mission - the staff lives the values of *the mountain*. This is what sets *the mountain* apart from any organization I've known. *The Mountain Quartet* translates this 'living the mission and values' into their music. They are troubadours of love, social justice and peace. It's important to me that other people, no matter what their religious faith, have the opportunity to experience this music!"

In order to share stories of the songs, the CD will be packaged in a small booklet that gives a brief explanation or description of each piece. The CDs will be available early in 1999. Because they won't be ready in time for the holidays, you may purchase a gift certificate by filling out the order form on page 7 of this edition of *The Mountain Matters*. We will send you or the recipient of the gift an attractive certificate in December, and the CD will be sent as soon as possible after production. The CD is intended to be a fundraiser for *the mountain* and the \$25.00 price includes postage and handling.



On the road with *the mountain*



As 1999 unfolds, *The Mountain Quartet* and Larry Wheeler will be traveling to take the message of *the mountain* to Unitarian Universalist Churches in Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Virginia. The dates include:

♫	Friday, January 15	Charleston, SC	Concert
♫	Sunday, January 17	Augusta, GA	Worship Service
♫	Saturday, February 20	Winston-Salem, NC	Concert
♫	Sunday, February 21	Winston-Salem, NC	Worship Service
♫	Tuesday, February 23	Chapel Hill, NC	Concert
♫	Thursday, February 25	Richmond, VA	Concert
♫	Saturday, February 27	Charlotte, NC	Concert
♫	Sunday, February 28	Charlotte, NC	Worship Service

If you're located anywhere close to these cities, save the dates and plan to attend one of the programs. The Worship Service music is completely different from the Concert music. The voices of Tom & Jane Warth and Ian & Shelley Denham blend so beautifully and it is always a treat to hear them sing together.

6 Our profound thanks to . . .

Rhododendron Vision Holders

(\$20,000 - \$24,999)

Anonymous

Mountain Laurel Vision Holders

(\$15,000 - \$19,999)

Pat Gnagey, Franklin, NC

Flame Azalea Vision Holders

(\$10,000 - \$14,999)

Theo Reeve, Black Mountain, NC

Life Members

(\$1,600 - \$2,000)

Mary Poole & Paul Ebacher, Safety Harbor, FL
Margaret Ann & Richard Hogue, Grovetown, GA
Peggy Block, Ridgefield, CT
Doyle Chadwick & Jo Ann Hasty, Powell, TN

Memorial Memberships

Anne Hornberger, Gainesville, FL
Bob Hornberger, Gainesville, FL
Sally Bellamy, Tallahassee, FL

In Memoriam

Betty Talley, Blacksburg, VA

Mountain Information System (Gifts Of \$250 +)

Ed & Jean Mangiafico—\$2000

John & Kathy Bohstedt—\$1000

Ibba & Tom Surface—\$1000

Bottom Of The Mountain (Gifts Of \$250 +)

Mary Ann Ely—\$500

Tricia Hansard & Summer King—\$250

Margaret & Bill Kleiber—\$250

Deborah Schillo—\$1000

John & Ruth Tori—\$500

Dorothy & Richard Wertzel—\$400

Cabin Upgrades

Cabin 14 — Phil & Linda Sterner and Family,
Winston-Salem, NC — \$15,000

Cabin 7 — Pat Gnagey, Franklin, NC — \$5,000

Special Gifts

Claire Keane—Fax Modem For Windows
Myrtle Lockwood—Additional Gift for Memorial Garden
Link & Brittany Walls—Milestone Learning Center
Larry Wheeler & Nancy Heath—Computer
John & Diane Haverstock—Computer
Anne Heath—Laser Printer
Joe & Joan Moore—Pictures Of Birds For Cabins
Margaret Schilling—Books, Craft Supplies, Toys
Richard Johnson—Connection Services Of Prime Time
Mark & Bonnie Gramlich—Computer Supplies

Thank you for short-term loans which help maintain the momentum . . .

John & Kathy Bohstedt — Knoxville, TN

Rosemary Burns — Oak Ridge, TN

Ian & Shelley Denham — Highlands, NC

Doug & Ouida Hotch — Sky Valley, GA

Elaine Miller — Gainesville, FL

Bill & Mary Nelson — Knoxville, TN

Charlotte & Merrill Palmer — Clemson, SC

Linda & Mike Plummer — Jacksonville, FL

Margaret Schilling — Greenville, SC

Norma Zabel — Gainesville, FL

VOLUNTEERS OF NOTE

Sally Bellamy was officially recognized for her vast contributions to **the mountain** with the presentation of an Official Volunteer shirt. Generations of staff have come to love Sally's very direct approach to getting things done. And, Win Southworth, a UU from the DC area and a "professional" volunteer was also recognized. Win has spent 2 to 3 weeks for the last several years working in every job on **the mountain**. Our sincerest thanks to both Win and Sally.

Volunteering is alive and well at **the mountain**. Through October members and friends have put in over 2700 hours on site completing many projects, large and small. (That's the equivalent of 1 1/4 staff members for a year!)

If you've ever wondered what it is like to work at **the mountain**, become a regular Mountain Volunteer—in the course of helping with all the things we do, you'll get an opportunity to visit with staff and understand the joy and pride we take in our work. Best of all, you'll be part of a team which is passionately committed to fulfilling the mission of **the mountain**.

A note from Pat . . .

Thank you, thank you, thank you! In early September, fourteen mountain staff members came down to my house (while the remaining staff stayed behind to run the mountain) and six hours later, they had completely painted the exterior of my home. I truly appreciate both groups, especially since I've had to be mostly indoors for five months due to being highly allergic to the stings of the many buzzing insects which live in my area. I had the pleasure of "working for the multitudes" again and that was wonderful for me. Everywhere I see my very white, clean house, I am thankful all over again.

Pat Gnagey

And the building goes on . . . Cabins 12 & 20

7

We've had such great comments over the summer and into the Fall about Cabins 13-19 – our newly remodeled cabins. Gone are the concerns over mustiness, breezes blowing through and – well, you know. Instead we hear about gas heat, tight cabins, new windows and doors, double sinks, nice and clean . . . Well, we figured we needed to keep on building and we're delighted to say that our first guests in the new Cabins 12 and 20 arrived the day before Thanksgiving – again to rave reviews!

CABIN 12 – made possible by donations from **Margaret Schilling** (Greenville, SC) and the **Baum Family** (Lakeland, FL) – is the first of the duplexed cabins to be remodeled.

CABIN 20 – made possible by a donation from the **Comstock Family** (Yarmouth, ME) – situated nearest Heritage Hall, has been outfitted to be another handicapped cabin – long, wide ramp, larger bathroom, and other fixtures. This only leaves Cabins 7-11 not remodeled and we want to do them as soon as we can in 1999. Cabin 7 has pledged for the necessary \$15,000 while Cabins 8-11 have only \$5,000 of the required \$15,000 in hand.

You can help! Pledge funds to help us remodel a cabin OR make a short-term loan of at least \$5,000 (from now until at least June 30, 1999). We'll pay 6% interest—an interest rate that's a lot better than money market accounts are currently paying. *It helps you* with better interest and *it helps the mountain* to keep the momentum going. We want to be proud of all of our facilities and having these cabins completed will really help us get there. Questions? Call Larry Wheeler at ext. 230.

Please Remember *the mountain* As You Plan Your Year-End Giving

This will be a great year for *the mountain* in any respect you want to look at it. Giving will reach a new high of at least \$450,000. We hope to end the year with even stronger support which will enable us to enter 1999 with momentum and the ability to immediately start and continue some projects which will make *the mountain* that much more inviting to individuals and groups.

Think About These Options:

- * Upgrading Cabins 7 - 11 (See Article above)
- * The Mountain Information System's network backbone and communications equipment
- * Bottom Of The Mountain Project
 - ✓ New Docks, Fix 2nd Lake Dam, Accessible
 - ✓ Walkway, Bog At 3rd Lake
 - ✓ Pavilion covering 1/2 Of Tennis Court
 - ✓ Crafts Barn Make Over
 - ✓ New Low And High Elements For Challenge Course
- * General Fund – It Helps With Our Overall Efforts
 - ** A Gift Of At Least \$50 Qualifies You As A "Member" For A Year.
 - ** If You're Not Yet A Life Member, Consider Becoming One – As Little As \$33.33/Month.
 - ** If you are a Life Member or Patron Member or Vision Holder, consider upgrading to the next level with a 5 year Pledge.

Do It Now While It's Fresh In Your Mind!

Remember-your gift to *the mountain* is tax deductible to the full extent that the law allows.

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Yes! I want to make a donation to support The Mountain's Vision!

APPLY MY CONTRIBUTION TO:

☐ Information Systems ☐ Bottom of The Mountain ☐ Cabins ☐ General Fund
☐ \$ _____ ☐ \$5000 ☐ \$1000 ☐ \$750 ☐ \$500 ☐ \$250 ☐ \$100 ☐ \$50

PLEASE SEND ME _____ CD GIFT CERTIFICATES @ \$25 x _____ (#) = \$ _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone (day) _____ (evening) _____

Peace on Earth . . . Good Will to all!



THE MOUNTAIN RETREAT & LEARNING CENTER, INC.

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THE MOUNTAIN



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