



# The Mountain Matters

THE MOUNTAIN RETREAT & LEARNING CENTERS, INC.

August 2000



As I write this report we are in the middle of our summer programs. Junior High, Elementary, Beginning, ASCENDER and Work Adventure camps have finished, Senior High camp is going strong and we just finished a most successful Grandparent/Grandchild week. There is a wonderful energy about this place in the summer. Our biggest concern is the drought – we are significantly behind in rainfall. We are conserving water and paying attention to the potential for fires. Fortunately, we have an excellent staff that manages well in times of heightened alerts such as these.

This issue of *The Mountain Matters* places special emphasis on our fall programs. We have wonderful offerings as well as great opportunities for guests to just drop-in and experience **The Mountain**. Please read the Retreat Center and Milestone reports carefully. Opportunities abound for you to participate in a **Mountain** experience this year. Call, write or check us out on our WebPages ([www.mrlc.org](http://www.mrlc.org)).

While we continue to run all of the programs that have made **The Mountain** so special over the years, we continue to develop new opportunities. I'm pleased to announce that we have hired **Dr. Helen Bishop** as the Acting Director of our new Learning Center for Leadership. LCL is our newest initiative committed to developing and delivering collaborative, transformational leadership training across the continent through technology. She, along with our half-time Program Resource Consultant **Laurel Amabile** (see our June 2000 TMM edition), will be working to develop the strategic and business plans for the Learning Center. Helen comes to us

## President's Report

having just completed eight years as the District Executive in Central Midwest District where she established herself as an excellent leadership course developer and trainer. With a Doctorate Degree in Organizational Leadership and a Masters in Educational

Technology, Helen is well qualified to lead this division of The Mountain Retreat & Learning Centers.

We will keep you updated in future issues of *The Mountain Matters* as to our progress in developing the Learning Center for Leadership. If you have interests or questions now, please contact me at **The Mountain** as we would be more than happy to discuss this exciting venture with you.

As I conclude my report for this issue, I am sorry to announce that KJ Frelin, our Food Service Director for the last 5 years has moved on to pursue ownership/management of her own restaurant. KJ has done a fine job as Food Service Director and will be missed. However, with her leaving we are taking this opportunity to revision the entire food service operation: what can we do better; how do we respond to our growing, changing constituencies; can we offer healthier foods with more variety; can we offer more vegetarian selections? Our food service and program staffs are addressing these issues now as they plan to have a new vision for food service at **The Mountain** by Labor Day. They would appreciate your input. If you have thoughts about this, please send a note to Food Service, c/o Bob MacDicken.

Again, please read this edition carefully and make your plans now to be a part of a **Mountain** program this fall. I hope you enjoy the rest of your summer.

Tom



## Land-Use Plan Update

The MR&LCs is moving forward in line with the strategic plan for the development of the newly acquired 12 acres of land at the base. We have engaged the services of Dames & Moore, one of the country's leading environmental consulting and civil engineering firms. Working with our land-use planner **Richard Rothman** and our architectural consultant **Bill Pulgram**, they will undertake the following over the next two months: A Phase I Environmental Site Assessment; Waste and Potable Water System Evaluations; Master Plan Testing; Preliminary Construction

Budgets; Transit Feasibility Study; and Sustainable Technologies Investigation. Their work will be thorough and far-reaching. Based upon their conclusions we will be positioned well to develop a realistic business plan for the proper, timely and environmentally responsible development of the land. Stay tuned – we will give you an update in each issue of *The Mountain Matters*.

## THE RETREAT CENTER



### A View from the Summit

By Bob MacDicken, Director

*"Reach out, keep reaching out, keep bringing in. This is how we are going to live for a long time: not always, for every gardener knows that after the digging, after the planting, after the long season of tending and growth, the harvest comes."*

— Marge Piercy

These words are a challenge for me as I look forward to this fall. The excitement of summer youth camp is still ringing in my ears, and it would be easy to sit back and enjoy the great memories that go along with MountainCamp. Not that things slow down at **The Mountain** after camp, but rather that the Fall and all the changes that it brings are a constant reminder of how much we need to "keep reaching out, keep bringing in."

I have been impressed with the quality and thoughtfulness of the youth who attend MountainCamp. From the Junior High campers who couldn't stop talking about issues of economic justice and how to change the world, to the Work and Adventure campers and other campers who, through work projects, made our corner of the world a little better, to an ASCENDER struggling with his own personal spiritual questions: these are impressive youth. So many of the camp youth, like those who participate in Milestone programs, give me hope for the future of our world.

It also seems to be an awesome responsibility that all of us share to make sure that the world these young people inherit is the best we can make it. So what has all this to do with The Retreat Center? Forgive me if what follows sounds a little like a sermonette, but I need to draw on my own UU faith to talk about how it comes together for me.

Our pagan ancestors understood the precious balance of life that we share with the rest of creation. They also understood the value of renewal and reflection, for after the season of harvest comes celebration and rest. The Psalmist also understood the value of rest and renewal, noting that "they who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength." We need this renewal, and the Retreat Center can and does offer it to those who would find it here. Our humanist forebears recognized the value in the interchange with other humans as we struggle to create a better world. **The Moun-**

**tain** provides many opportunities to meet others who are sharing this journey with us, and to engage in reflection, analysis and challenge.

And what about the "fun" part of **The Mountain** — the rafting trips, Dry Falls and Pot Holes, art and crafts, hikes, rock climbing, high ropes, social hour, volleyball, field games, cribbage in the dining hall, jigsaw puzzles set up in the library? These, too, are part of the process, part of the renewal, part of the connections we make here.

I would not be so presumptuous as to suggest that a trip to **The Mountain** is the UU equivalent of a journey to Mecca, but it is true that for more than a generation, UUs and non-UUs alike have found challenge, learning, renewal and refreshment here. Our calendar for this fall is full of opportunities for you to experience this again.

"**The Mountain** is not the same . . .," a former camper told me recently. "It has changed." I assured him that we do not want to "change" at the sacrifice of the heart of **The Mountain** itself, and that we will listen whenever anyone talks about what **The Mountain** means to them. It is true, however, that **The Mountain** has changed, and will continue to change. Universalists were among the earliest Christian churches to embrace the concept of evolution and recognize that everything changes. It is also a truism of contemporary organizational development thinking that change is not an option — our option is to either help shape the direction of change or to be swept along with change created apart from us. The change we seek is one that values and builds on the heritage of more than a generation of **Mountain** members, while looking to a future filled with both promise and challenge.

At the head of this column is a new title, reflecting the wonder of this place and its vistas, as well as its relationship to the forward vision of The Mountain Retreat and Learning Centers (MR&LCs). As often repeated in looking at the future development discussions, the "bottom" has come to be known as "The Base" and the Retreat Center is the Summit. It was Richard Rothman, our land use architect, who pointed out that people wait a lifetime to reach "The Summit," and at **The Mountain** they can reach it every day.

In our planning, our programs, and our vision, **The Mountain Retreat Center** is seeking ways to ensure that we stay, to borrow a phrase from the New Testament, "rooted and grounded in love." At the same time, the hawks that often circle below our summit seem to know that we must also reach to the sky, reach to an ever-new and more challenging future.

To return to the theme that has been a part of my column since I first arrived, what we need is you. We need your input, your ideas about the kinds of programs and events we need for the future. If it has been awhile since you've been here — indeed, if you and I have never met face-to-face, isn't it time for a visit? Let us hear from you. Come to **The Mountain**, and encourage others to come, this fall.

For those who have come again and again, please know how valuable you are to us. We look forward to your next visit.

Shalom.



PS: We'll have a full report on MountainCamp in the next issue of *The Mountain Matters*.

PPS: For UUs who want the full text of the Piercy poem, you can find it in *Singing the Living Tradition*, reading number 568.

## Carol Hamilton named Sales and Promotion Manager

**Carol Hamilton** of Silver Spring, Maryland, has been named Sales and Promotion Manager for the Retreat Center.

Carol has more than seven years experience with mission-oriented, non-profit organizations, having recently completed two years as Assistant Director and Interim Director for *Grantmakers for Children, Youth and Families (GCYF)*. While at GCYF, Carol was responsible for increasing membership and conference attendance by more than 100%. She also represented GCYF on two committees of the Council on Foundations.

Prior to her work with GCYF, Carol served as a Manager for *Women Work! The National Network for Women's Employment*, where she was responsible for newsletters and marketing materials. She was a presenter at the 1998 *Women Work! Policy Summit* and at the *Women Work! Professional Development Institute*. She also previously served as a program associate for the *Coalition on Human Needs*, and was a writer and publications director for Bradley Communications.

Carol attends the UU Church in Silver Spring, Maryland. A graduate of Swarthmore College in Pennsylvania, she also attended Georg-August University in Germany.

Carol and her daughter, Yassimon, plan to arrive at **The Mountain** in early August, in time to enroll Yassi in the Highlands school. (Yassi actually has a head start on Carol — she was a camper this summer in the Work and Adventure Camp.) We look forward to welcoming them, and hope that you will get to know them soon.

## Fall in Love with The Mountain Again

This fall is the time to come back to **The Mountain**. The magic of the fall is everywhere in September and October, and especially at **The Mountain**. For people who have not been here for awhile, this fall may be the time for you to visit and to rediscover the magic of our mountaintop.

With new programs, improved facilities, and an enhanced menu in the Dining Hall, you'll find your stay at **The Mountain** even better than ever. The calendar is full of great programs and events. Here are just a few:

### Congregational Retreats

Congregations from Michigan to Florida have discovered that a retreat at **The Mountain** is a great opportunity for refreshment and renewal that can be carried back to re-energize their programs and outreach in their local community. Already there are 10 such retreats scheduled for this fall.

There are still a few weekends available to schedule that important event for your congregation. Whether for a special family event, a planning weekend for board and staff focusing on 2001 and beyond, or a time for a men's group, women's group, choir, or other group in your congregation to spend important time together, **The Mountain** is the place to be.

**Mountain** staff will work with individuals in your congregation to design a program just for you. Programs can be recreational (hikes, challenge course, rock climbing, canoeing), thematic (social justice, environment, personal growth, spirituality), or just relaxing and refreshing.

The weekends of **October 27-29** (Daylight Savings Time ends, so you can catch that extra hour of sleep and still make breakfast), **November 3-5** (a chance to look at important social issues just prior to the Election?), **December 1-3** and **December 15-17** still have space available. Call our **Sales and Promotion office** at (828) 526-5838, Ext. 217, to reserve your space.

### Adult Programs

#### Prime Connections

**Sunday, Sept. 17 - Wednesday, Sept. 20, 2000**

This special program for gay men over 40 occurs during the best of seasons at **The Mountain** — warm sunny September days and cool evenings. The program provides opportunities to socialize, network, attend workshops, and explore the Blue

Continues on page 4



Fall in Love . . . continued from page 3

Ridge Mountains at the beginning of fall. Workshops will feature **Lee Knight** sharing Appalachian History, Culture, and Folklore through music, stories, and a special trip to Foxfire.

Other activities include:

- Early morning wake-up stretching and movement
- Meditation
- A birthday party for everyone!
- Low challenge course
- Sing-along music, arts and crafts, waterfall tour
- Candle lighting service
- Hiking

The fee for the program is **\$260** and includes housing, activities, and meals. For a brochure and registration form, contact **The Mountain** at (828) 526-5838 or email us at [mountain@dnet.net](mailto:mountain@dnet.net).

## Paddling in the Fall Colors

**Sunday, Oct. 8 – Wednesday, Oct. 11, 2000**

Come paddle with us! During one of the peak color weeks in the mountains, what better way to enjoy nature's palette than on the beautiful rivers of Appalachia. On Sunday after-



noon we'll paddle on our lake to get the basics down. Monday we'll go rafting as a way to warm up for canoeing on Tuesday. All paddling levels

welcome; paddling lessons will be provided.

The fee of **\$276 per person** includes housing, meals, equipment, instruction, and transportation on trips.

Questions? Call **Nancy Heath**, 828-526-5838, Ext. 259, or via email, [mountain@dnet.net](mailto:mountain@dnet.net) (be sure to put "Attn: Nancy" in the subject line).

## Elderhostel – Appalachian Homeland

**Sunday, Oct. 29 – Friday, Nov. 3, 2000**

**\$375** includes food, lodging, program and field trip.

Before the fall color has departed, join us at **The Mountain** for a week's study of this *Appalachian Homeland*. Three of our most popular instructors will offer courses on three different historical times in Appalachian culture. **George Ellison**, noted naturalist and Cherokee historian, will explore the settlement of this area by the first native Americans 10,000 years ago, and the rich Cherokee culture that has emerged.

This course includes a field trip to the interactive Museum of the Cherokee and other sites, examining Native American history through the present day.

Then experience the Civil War in these mountains — a very different war indeed. **Jim Taylor** is an instructor who immerses himself in the history and music of those times. Through historical narrative and authentic music, you will discover the unique nature of that struggle and the lasting impact of brother against brother, family against family, clan against clan. Even today, music and stories are inherent in Appalachian culture, having been handed down for generations.



Jim Taylor

**Sheila Kay Adams** is a seventh generation Appalachian who brings tears of laughter as she provides a humorous, touching glimpse of growing up in Appalachia through family stories, beautiful ballads, and music.

## Youth Programs

With the success of summer camp still fresh in our memories (we'll have a full report in the next issue of *The Mountain Matters*), we are looking forward to three Youth CONferences this fall, and three more in early 2001. Registration information will be sent out to MREs/DREs in September. We'll also send it to people who request to be on the CON mailing list.

The popular weekend events fill fast, so plan now to get a group of youth together and attend. The dates are: **November 3-5, 17-19, and January 19-21** for Junior High, and **December 1-3, February 9-11 and 23-25** for Senior High. Call the Youth Programs office at (828) 526-5838, Ext. 234, for more information.

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# MILESTONE LEARNING CENTER



## Views from the Milestone Staff

By: Sarah Walls

June was a busy, successful and interesting month for Milestone and the Leadership School for Social Justice. This article and the one on the next page on "standing up and speaking out" will give you an idea of some of the fun and exciting times we had.

## Leadership School for Social Justice Dallas, Texas Youth Make a Lasting Impact

"In a way, I think it changed my life. I'd love to help everyday," commented Leslie Owen, one of 22 high school students who traveled to **The Mountain** in early June for a week of service projects. They intended to enhance their group dynamics and learn more about social issues. They

reached their goals by putting forward positive attitudes and an openness to learn. The spirit of the group was incredible and their energy inspired folks around them, including me.



The LSSJ Dallas group takes time out for a group photo.

In addition to making the program such a success, the group extended their generosity in another way. They donated \$280 for the development of the cabbage patch and another \$300 to Milestone. The staff was incredibly touched that they would donate their hard-earned money to MR&LCs after a year of intensive fundraising.

THANK YOU to the Dallas youth and 1st Unitarian Church for your support, enthusiasm and commitment to make a difference!

## Uniting Young People for Change Leadership School for Social Justice Graduates' Conference

Two hundred youth and young adults across the country have participated in a Leadership School for Social Justice in the past 3 years — most of which have taken place in the last 18 months. This reflects our growing momentum and credibility in communities throughout the nation.

Reaching so many people has been an opportunity for Milestone to meet its goals of providing tools, skills and training in leadership and social justice. More importantly, it is a statement about how many young people are willing to invest their time and energy to work for social change. Through their heightened awareness and skills training, LSSJ "graduates" are better equipped to contribute.

I've had the privilege of getting to know these students, learning from their ideas and passion and working with them to develop effective strategies, ponder difficult ideas and build community together. Students of LSSJ programs live all over the United States, and have commented that they'd like to further their network and build ties of commit-

ted young people. We've heard this need! Therefore, Milestone will be hosting a Leadership School for Social Justice Graduates' Conference the weekend of October 20 – 22, 2000. Anyone who has previously participated in a Leadership School (on or offsite programs of any length) is invited to join us.

The process of putting together this weekend is an important learning experience in and of itself. Once a significant number of graduates sign up for the weekend, I'll ask for volunteers from that group to work with me on a planning committee. We envision the participants running much of the weekend themselves.

The program will provide a number of opportunities:

- Build community among people committed to social justice
- Establish a sustainable network between different groups of the past to utilize for idea sharing, support and collaboration
- Enhance and deepen skills required to work for social justice

*"This was where I first learned the power of non-violence, and where I was first inspired to become involved in many of the issues with which I am involved today."*

Geoff Boyce,  
LSSJ '97 participant

The Graduates' Conference is not to be missed! Call now for more details! (Ext. 241)