

THE Mountain matters

The Mountain
Celebrating
25 years
... and for generations to come

THE MOUNTAIN RETREAT & LEARNING CENTERS, INC.

November 2004

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The Mountain Matters
published by

THE MOUNTAIN

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"Q. Why are we so violent but not illiterate? A. Because we are taught to read."

From I'd Rather Teach Peace by author/educator Colman McCarthy

As we move through this, The Mountain's 25th year, we have taken time to listen to many Mountain members, trustees, staff, guests and especially young adults as we've talked about The Mountain's successes and shortcomings, its mission, programs and visions for the next 25 years. Most importantly, in addition to their expressed Mountain support, respondents shared heartfelt concerns about their local communities (neighborhoods, schools, churches) and the larger world community. They told us in many different ways that they look to The Mountain to be proactively involved in addressing these concerns by offering relevant programming.

As we listened, priorities took shape (achieve financial stability, maintain quality programs, remain relevant) and an expanded vision for The Mountain became clear, a vision most enthusiastically shaped by our young adults. And that vision is for The Mountain to be a place that educates, motivates and advocates for peace, both inner, personal peace, and outward to the larger community. Energized by this vision, we asked the Board of Trustees to come to The Mountain for a special board meeting October 9, a meeting focused on finances and vision.

Let me share with you what was discussed with the trustees that weekend. We began with some fundamental realities that put the peace initiatives in a context. They were:

- We believe that peacemaking can be taught and that young adults are passionately seeking alternatives to violence.
- The Mountain's vision has long been to raise and promote awareness and opposition to injustice and to encourage and enable political and social action in people of all ages.
- We embrace The Interfaith Alliance's statement that "the conflict around the world makes it clear that there is no more urgent task than to increase understanding and cooperative action between people of different faiths and religious traditions."
- We accept educator/author Colman McCarthy's challenge, "If peace is what every government says it seeks, and peace is the yearning of every heart, why aren't we studying it and teaching it in schools?"
- We believe William Sloane Coffin when he writes: "Peace is never the absence of tension but the presence of justice."
- We know that The Mountain's remote location is ideal for intensive study and contemplation, is an excellent facility for experiential education, is accessible to local communities, organizations and cultures that will allow for meaningful "field work" for participants and provide for collaborative opportunities around future programs and projects.

With these as a background the staff recommended that The Mountain undertake a series of peace education initiatives, offering programs to inter-faith, inter-cultural constituencies with academic and experiential education in peace and justice, and do so in collaboration with

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Mission Statement

"...to embrace the diversity of life, creating an environment to energize people to work for positive change."

About The Mountain

Located high in the Blue Ridge of the Southern Appalachian Mountains, The Mountain Retreat & Learning Centers is a place to expand your horizons—explore new ideas, meet new people and re-connect with yourself, community and the natural world.

Surrounded by the Nantahala National Forest, our home is Little Scales Mountain—four miles south-west of Highlands, North Carolina. At 4200' elevation, perched atop striking granite cliffs and nestled in an ancient dwarf white oak wind forest, our site is spectacular.

Open year-round, The Mountain offers excellent programming for all ages. Inspiration mixes with renewal as you challenge yourself to grow and learn.



Board of Trustees: 2004

Tony Stringer	Chair
Suze Armstrong	Development
John Blevins	Relationships
Terry Fletcher	Planning
Betty Holcomb	Relationships
Jessie Marie Johnson	Mission
Tom North	President
R. K. Whitstead	Financial Advisor
Ed Mangulica	Li Officer

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partnering educational institutions and justice-making organizations. The Mountain (its location, staff, programs and core values), will facilitate one's personal quest for inner peace and seek to empower interested individuals, by helping them to understand the history of violence, peace making and non-violent methods and peace activism.

Further we believe that with the facilitation of knowledgeable, skilled and passionate faculty, successful participation in these programs will lead to one or more of the following:

- Better informed and energized citizens engaged in creating peace and justice in the world.
- Increased personal leadership involvement in local and/or global peace and justice organizations.
- Employment, volunteer and internship opportunities with partnering organizations of The Mountain.
- Academic credits at an accredited educational institution and/or CEU credit from The Mountain.

The board and staff then engaged in a dialogue about this focus – how do we continue to offer the current programs we do so well while introducing a peace and justice focus? What will it cost? How does this focus help fund raising? What type of programs are envisioned? How and to whom do we market them? Who are potential partners, potential faculty? All good questions, all requiring thoughtful, informed discussions.

At the conclusion of the day the board passed the following resolution: "Be it resolved that the Board of Trustees strongly and enthusiastically endorses the establishment of a peace initiative by The Mountain to include academic and experiential education in peace and justice offered, wherever possible, in partnership with educational institutions and peace- and justice-making organizations."

So, peace education it is! I believe, based upon all of the above, that a focus on peace education is totally in line with The Mountain's mission, that it is responsive to the appeal "to be proactively involved in addressing our concerns about the world situation" and positions The Mountain to be truly a relevant institution for generations to come. And I believe this focus will generate an increase in participant and donor interest in The Mountain that will lead to long-term financial viability.

I ask you to be a part of this. Let us know how you can support our peace initiatives – programs of interest to you that you'd like to see us run, your skills as a potential faculty person; individuals and organizations you know that we should be in relationship with. And most importantly, support us financially. Send us a check today with a note that says, "I support The Mountain's peace initiatives."

I'd like to finish this column with two quotes that have had real meaning for me.

"I have sat at Meditation Rock and I have known with clarity and with certainty that there are places on this earth that are simply too beautiful to the human eye to permit an act of human violence. I have sat on that bare rock, looking out on those sensuously rolling hills, running my hands over the grooves and crannies of that cold stone and I have known it as a place of peace ... a place of sanctuary."

Tony Stringer

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Refugee Youth Bloom at The Mountain

Four refugee youth experienced things entirely new to them this summer at The Mountain. Thanks to the generosity of The Mountain, which awarded each of them a scholarship for two weeks of summer camp, **Gaye and Gonpue Tokpa**, 18 and 15, **Romeo Myou**, 17, and **Pacifique ("Puffy") Ugraneza**, 16, were able to learn and grow in new and unexpected ways. They found The Mountain camp provided them a boost to their self-confidence, newfound friends, and a lot of laughter and fun, as they embarked upon a variety of trips, sporting events and other activities. The youth, to their credit, stretched their English skills, and willingly ventured into the unknown; each reports he can't wait to return.

Romeo, a 10th grader at Avondale High School, from Liberia, had only been in the U.S. for four months when he left for The Mountain. He states that the first night there, he was saying to himself, "What am I doing here? Everyone speaks so fast, and I can't understand them." He made the decision to "force myself to learn and be around those people all the time," and within five days, "I was feeling better. I was feeling at home. When the first week was finished, I asked myself, 'How can the days run so fast?' and I changed my mind and wanted to spend another week on The Mountain."

Romeo spent a night "in the bush," toured The Mountain, attended an art class, went swimming and on a rock slide on a waterfall for the first time, and did some climbing. He began to enjoy the "morning circles" where the kids sang to guitar music, and the evening "family counsel" sessions where they discussed their day. He stated with a huge smile, "MountainCamp is the best place to be every summer, because if you go there, you won't want to come back."

Gaye Tokpa, who spent a year in Cote D'Ivoire in flight from Liberia, says "I was so happy when I got there because I had never been in the middle of all white people before," and he now has "cool" new friends. He loved the white-water rafting, the waterfall, canoeing, participating in an '80's dance, and looking at the clouds from the top of the tree house." He wants to go back for a month or more. Gaye and Gonpue's mother and dad both said their sons show more maturity now, and are much more willing to study. Both are students at Clarkston High School.



Making friends at MountainCamp 2004.

Native Rwandan "Puffy" Ugraneza, an 11th grade student at Brookwood High School, was reluctant to go to the camp at first, but "after some persuasion from my parents" agreed to attend. He described the intense schedule from 7 a.m. breakfast to 10:30 p.m. "lights out" as crammed with a variety of activities, with the kids able to choose what they wished to do. Besides the water sports he enjoyed, he mentions the dance events and "casino night," even

though the money was fake. But he makes clear, "The best part of The Mountain is its people ... they made me feel like I'd been going for years and years. The two weeks at The Mountain were probably the best time I've had in a long time," and says "I can't wait to go back. I love The Mountain like my own home."

Mountain staff enthusiastically welcomed the kids, and found that their presence greatly enriched the experience for everyone there. It was a remarkable opportunity for building trust, understanding and friendship across cultures. IRC and The Mountain are now working together to build strategies and to raise money to make it possible for more refugee youth to attend their programs in the future.

By: **Madeline Caruthers**

Americorps/VISTA Volunteer Int'l Rescue Committee
4151 Memorial Drive, Suite 201-C, Decatur GA 30032
404-292-7731, x32 — madeline@atl.intres.com

For more information about MountainCamp 2005, see the enclosed brochure.

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"Those who say it cannot be done should not interrupt those who are doing it." Chinese proverb

The Mountain is "doing peace." Please join us!

Tom

Simply Living Peace

By Shelley Denham

"I'm one of those volunteers you hate," she said sitting down at breakfast. Seeing our surprise, she continued, "... because I have an idea for a song after hearing The Mountain Quartet's peace message in your Elderhostel concert."

It was fascinating and disturbing to think that anyone – even in a tongue-in-cheek manner – would imagine an idea or suggestion evoking hate.

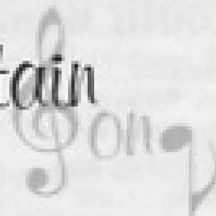
One of the gifts The Mountain gives us all is a safe and stimulating environment to take the time to engage each other in thoughtful philosophical discussion, which is what took place that morning in the Dining Hall.

We talked about the word "hate" – and peace and non-violence – how we might truly take responsibility for creating peace in our own sphere of influence, and the requirements, whether simple or radical, that this might entail.

For example, "Simply living peace" can start with deep listening ... to ourselves and to others, and creating awareness the way

Mountain

Sharing our
"Songs"



violence permeates everyday language. How many times do we create a document with points we refer to as "bullets"? When was the last time someone proudly "killed two birds with one stone?"

Our volunteer's comments, as well as many others we've heard lately, inspires us to provide the opportunity to share ideas for "Simply Living Peace" through our MountainSong columns. This will eventually include a glossary of "peace language" that you can help create. Many of us have seen language evolve to become more inclusive of gender and imagery ... now perhaps we can underscore "talking our talk" by removing violence from our words.

We also invite you to send a poem, cartoon, or brief story about something you've learned about simply living peace. Please include permission to print your item either in The Mountain Matters or on our website for both!

You may send submissions to Shelley Denham at shelley.denham@mountaincenters.org – or mail to The Mountain's P.O. box in care of "MountainSong."

Thank you!

"Dear Tom,

... I also wanted to tell you how much your closing remarks at The Mountain Talk meant to me personally. I am one of the few UUs who usually votes Republican. The current political climate has become so hostile and charged that I find myself retreating from engaging with people because of the raw emotions. What you said was like balm to my soul. Somehow you, and The Mountain, have always managed to stay above politics. That really inspires me. Our values are the same, our vision is the same—I just may have different ideas about how to get there... With sincere affection, Laura Whitehead"

These Groups Chose The Mountain

Celtic Shamans

Johnson C. Smith University

Solid Rock Baptist Youth

Presbyterian Student Retreat

Wake Forest University Graduate Students

International Golden Flower Tai Chi

Atlanta Budokan

Covenant of UU Pagans

St. Margaret's Episcopal Women

International Rescue Committee - Youth Leadership Training

Atlanta Unity Men

New York Metro UU Retreat

To reserve space for your group, call Jan Stanfield @ ext. 227.

More 2004-2005 Events

Native Voices – December 3-5, 2004

Fellowship of Reconciliation-Peacemakers Training – Jan. 4-11, 2005

Mary Our Queen Catholic Church – January 28-30, 2005

Atlanta Knitters Guild – February 18-21, 2005

Native Voices – April 1-3, 2005 and April 22-24, 2005

Southeast UU Ministers Association – April 4-7, 2005

Gay Spirit Visions Spring Gathering – April 8-10, 2005

Augusta UU Congregation – April 8-10, 2005

Enviro-scope – Midway School – April 13-15, 2005

Uber Family Reunion – June 17-19, 2005

Auburn UU Congregation – August 5-7, 2005

Priestess Community Gathering – August 26-28, 2005

Upcoming Fall & Winter Programs

For complete program descriptions, please refer to The Mountain's website, www.mountaincenters.org, or call the Guest Services Office (828-526-5838, ext. 0). Hurry to register – spaces are quickly filling!

HOLIDAY PROGRAMS – 2004

Thanksgiving Weekend

November 24-28, 2004

Reconnect with old friends, share stories and experiences of The Mountain's rich legacy, celebrate our successes and look forward to future possibilities.

First Adult	\$225/person
Second Adult (same family)	\$100/person
Children 0-17	FREE
Commuter Rate – \$28/day or \$84 for dinner on Wednesday through breakfast on Sunday	

Solstice – Out of the Darkness – Into the Light

December 17-19, 2004

Experience the mystery of the shortest day of the year in The Mountain's unparalleled natural beauty as we honor the passage of Earth around our own Bright Shining Star.

	Adult	Youth 4-17	Infants 0-3	Commuter
Early Bird Rate (before 11/18/04)	\$136	\$70	FREE	\$90
Regular Rate (on or after 11/18/04)	\$163	\$84	FREE	

New Year's at The Mountain

Option A – December 30 - January 2, 2005

Option B – December 31 - January 2, 2005

There's just nothing like New Year's at The Mountain – the combination of a warm, welcoming community, the beauty and wonder of The Mountain itself, and the chance to get away from the frantic pace of the "common place." Helen Bishop will offer another fascinating and inspiring workshop, "Connecting our Principles and Values to Peace Work"; plus Randy and Sandy Locke will lead us in one of their authentic and respectful intergenerational "Hoe-Downs" featuring music and dances from rural and Appalachian America. Youth will also be treated to their own special programming.

	Option A		Option B	
	Adult	Youth 4-17	Adult	Youth 4-17
Early Bird Rate (before 12/01/04)	\$189	\$105	\$136	\$70
Regular Rate (on or after 12/01/04)	\$227	\$126	\$176	\$100
Children 0-3 – FREE				
Commuter Rate – \$120				

2005

Gay Spirit Visions Winter Gathering

January 14-16, 2005

For registration information, please call or email The Mountain; or look up www.gayspiritvisions.org.

	Adult
Early Bird (before Dec. 16, 2004)	\$155
Regular (on or after Dec. 16, 2004)	\$186

Humanity's Team- A Civil Rights Movement for the Soul

March 4-6, 2005

Founded by "Conversations With God" author Neale Donald Walsch in 2003, Humanity's Team is a bridge-building organization that seeks to produce a climate in which humanity can create an emancipating New Spirituality. By doing so, it creates a different world – a world in which God's only emotion is total love for all humanity and Life Itself, and God's only agenda includes no objective other than to empower Life to produce more Life, more abundantly and more gloriously in each moment. For more details about this program, contact Adam Rosenoff, awrosenoff@yahoo.com.

WomenSpirit Institute – May 11-13, 2005

WomenSpirit Gathering – May 13-15, 2005

The Institute and Gathering are biannual events at The Mountain in the Spring and Fall that offer the experience of an all-woman retreat for strengthening talents and renewing energy in a supportive and safe environment. Unitarian Universalist Womenspirit expects and encourages all women to honor the safety, integrity and confidentiality of those attending its sponsored events. For information, please contact the WomenSpirit registrar at Registrar@uwwomenspirit.org or look up www.uwwomenspirit.org. Spaces fill quickly!

Lesbian Identity Weekend

Option A – May 20-22, 2005; Option B – May 19-22, 2005

Join us for a weekend of spirited exploration, fun, conversation, laughter, quiet moments, companionship and dancing at The Mountain. We create a safe space and time to relax, renew, and revive in a community of lesbian women of all ages. There will be a variety of workshops and special programs, so bring your stories, your musical instruments, and your arts. Contact The Mountain for a brochure and registration.

Adults Only	Option A	Option B
Early Bird Rate (before 04/21/05)	\$320	\$280
Regular Rate (on or after 04/21/05)	\$280	\$305
Commuter	\$130	\$145

LEARNING CENTER FOR LEADERSHIP

The Mountain's Learning Center for Leadership And YOU:

Resources for Strengthening Non-profits in this Changing World

The Mountain's Learning Center for Leadership provides innovative, experiential residential programs, consulting services and online courses to help non-profit organizations address daily challenges.

Non-profit organizations must work to fulfill their mission and vision with fewer resources in today's environment of constant change. Therefore, vibrant non-profit board members, staff and volunteers need to reach a new understanding of their roles and responsibilities and have skills to implement them.

Effective, efficient, change management, both internally and externally, are required in order to meet the needs of clients, funders and stakeholders. Supporting people in the context of organizational mission and vision and thinking strategically about systems issues are critical to non-profit success.

Learning Center for Leadership residential and online programs are designed to expand professional skills in:

- Communication
- Small group processes and dynamics
- Facilitation
- Conflict management
- Team building
- Systems thinking
- Volunteer management
- Temperaments and styles
- Change management
- Leadership
- Assessment and evaluation
- Strategic planning
- Volunteer management
- Media relations and publicity

Customized Programs and Retreats for Boards, Staff and Others

Customized learning experiences are available to your organization at The Mountain in North Carolina or in your location.

These programs will be tailored to your desired outcomes. Experienced facilitators will design the experience with your organization's mission, goals, structure, history and realities in mind.

*"If I had to choose
only one resource for
continuing education,
it would be this one."*

Wendy von Zirpolo
Haverhill, MA

Learning Communities

The Learning Center for Leadership builds ongoing learning communities throughout the country, using listservs, and online courses. These learning communities allow you to maintain contact with people, sharing information and knowledge around learning experiences.

Consulting Services

LCL staff can consult with your organization in the areas of:

- Strategic and long-range planning
- Conflict management
- Organizational structure, governance and practices
- Mission/vision
- Board and staff development



*Experiential
Team Building*

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Save the Dates!

MARK YOUR CALENDARS NOW!

Program details and pricing available January 2005

Memorial Weekend Gathering

May 27-29, 2005

This is the weekend to reconnect and renew relationships, share memories, and explore our plans to assure that The Mountain stays a relevant institution for generations to come.

Religious Education Week at The Mountain

July 10-15, 2005

Once again, sponsored by the Thomas Jefferson and Mid-south Districts, this dynamic training is meant to continue education, share ideas, and re-energize for the year to come!

Mountain School for Congregational Leadership

July 25-31, 2005

Come to The Mountain for an opportunity to expand your skills as a congregational leader. MSCCL provides opportunities to explore your own leadership style, gain interpersonal and organizational skills, deepen your spiritual life, and network with people from small, mid-size and large Unitarian Universalist congregations in the Southeast.

Youth Programs

MountainCamp 2005 - See enclosed brochure

NEW for 2005!!

Inter-faith Youth Conferences

Sr. High - February 4-6

Elementary - February 18-20

Jr. High - March 11-13

For more information or to register, contact your RE Director or Gillian Derham at ext. 241.

Elderhostel at The Mountain

Don't let the name fool you - hostellers are vibrant, eager to learn, and can start in their 50's. What could be better than a fantastic program in a fantastic environment? March through September programs are open for registration now. See the Mountain's website, www.mountaincenters.org for complete program descriptions or contact Susan Smith at ext. 225.

We Can't Spell Volunteering Without U or I

By Pamela Courtney, Resource Coordinator

That's correct, we can't spell "volunteering" without U or I. We celebrate the contribution our volunteers make to The Mountain and the positive impact our volunteers make every day. Thanks to all of you who give of your time, energy and elbow grease. Our lives are better and enriched because of your commitment. Mountain Volunteers can truly say, "I have made a difference."

Hurricane Ivan left us with trees down and lots of clean up. Robert E.

Smith was here in the midst of the storm to help with covering roofs. Ravi Gupta and Greg Aiello stayed an extra week, after their retreat, to help cut trees, haul



Hurricane Ivan Clean Up Crew

brush, limbs and filled in wherever they were needed. Ravi said, "This was a great experience, I received much more than you will ever know - I received more than I gave. The staff was wonderful to work with."

In October, the Asheville UU Congregation completed the Labyrinth; earlier this summer, youth who participated in the Dallas Congregational Leadership School for Social Justice also worked hard on the Labyrinth. We encourage everyone to experience the labyrinth during your next visit. It will be memorable.

Recent Volunteer of Note (240 volunteer hours) recognition goes to: Jonathan Gray, Parker Jones, Bob Hargrove and Irene Ratner.

If "U" would like to volunteer, "I" would love to talk with you! Contact me at Pam.Courtney@mountaincenters.org, 828-526-5838, ext. 263.

CLASSIFIEDS

LAND

For sale by owner (Atlanta UU's) - 6+ acres heavily wooded land adjacent to Nantahala National Forest in Horse Cove Valley just east of Highlands, NC. For details, call 404-688-6161 or visit www.bulpernd.com.