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The Mountain Matters
published by

THE MOUNTAIN
RETREAT & LEARNING CENTERS, INC.
P.O. Box 1299
Highlands, NC 28741
(828) 526-5838
fax (781) 846-1295
info@mountaincenters.org
www.mountaincenters.org

Shelley Denham, Editor
Walita Olson, Production

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Change and Changelessness

**Bob Sorrells, former Trustee, said years ago,
"The Mountain is about change and changelessness."**

This edition of *The Mountain Matters* reflects much change: you'll see a new logo – the result of years of consideration. And continuing the November edition's focus on Peace, you will see new programs and perspectives, reflecting a "changeless" vision to be a relevant institution for generations to come, actively working with others to create communities committed to peace, justice, civility and compassionate behavior. We've added a new **Trustee Matters** column – so that you can become better acquainted with this highly skilled, energetic and generous group of people. There is a **Youth Matters** column, so that we can all be in touch with "the generations to come." And you'll find regular calendar updates in each edition in 2005.

The Mountain just celebrated its 26th Thanksgiving in November. Those of us here for the weekend – including Founding Chair, Roger Comstock and Co-Founding Director, Mo Wheeler, reflected together on "change and changelessness," starting with the evolution of The Mountain's Mission.

- | | |
|-----------|--|
| 1979-1990 | "to be a place for Unitarians and Universalists of the southeast" |
| 1990-1992 | "to be a place for Unitarian Universalists and like-minded people" |
| 1992-1996 | "to be a center for humankind to experience Unitarian Universalism" |
| 1996 ... | "to embrace the diversity of life, creating an environment to energize people to work for positive change" |

In a profound way, we believe this current mission statement is the personification of our Core Values (based on UU Principles), and that these values in many ways reflect the values of numerous faith backgrounds. They may be expressed differently, of course, but they still encompass similar standards of how to "be" in this world – transcending specific faiths and cultures. In this interreligious global community, we all must find ways to "accept one another and encouraging spiritual growth." That doesn't mean accept **if you agree** on the tough issues; it means encourage dialogue, understanding and finding commonality in the midst of differences. The Mountain has always been, and will forever remain, ideal for creating safe and meaningful community – changelessness in the midst of an expanding vision to reach a broader and more diverse constituency.

Another aspect of "changelessness" that we must constantly address is ongoing financial pressure. Ever since 1979 this has been a tremendous challenge. So, in 2005, we are investing significant energy in revenue generating initiatives, and in continuing to manage expenses. Among these efforts are new Peace Initiatives and an expanded focus on Marketing, Sales and Development. What remains changeless is our commitment to continuing

Continued on page 2

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 Scaly Mountain—four miles southwest 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: 2005

Tony Stringer	Chair
Suzie Armstrong	Development
John Blevins	Relationships
Terry Flesher	Planning
Betty Holcomb	Relationships
Janice Marie Johnson	Mission
Ed Mangiafico	Planning
Tom Warth	President
R. K. Whitehead	Financial Advisor
Randy Whitt	Finance

Continued from page 1

programs that are the hallmark of The Mountain: Youth Camps, Elderhostel, Congregational Retreats. The bottom line of this institution is measured by its outcomes – by the transformative work it is doing. And we will do what's necessary to build a strong financial foundation.

At Thanksgiving, we also reflected upon visions and values that were articulated in 1979 by the Founding Trustees and Staff, including:

- Commitment to environmental stewardship, to physical and financial accessibility.
- Creating communities and providing opportunities for spiritual growth and renewal.
- Providing safe and positive boundaries for youth, and nurturing their sense of self in relationship to their own values and in community with others.

For over 25 years, we have remained true to these core founding values, honoring and furthering them. What has "changed" or, more accurately, continued to evolve from those original visions is our focus on serving a much larger continental – and now, international – constituency. By broadening and deepening our program offerings, assuring their relevance to meet ever-changing needs, we appeal to a wider audience. This is essential in order to assure that The Mountain will indeed be here "for generations to come . . ."

There is much to celebrate in this new year. There is much to be concerned about, locally and globally . . . and there is much to do.

The Trustees and staff are committed to Peace Education at The Mountain, and we ask you to be involved. Mark your calendars and attend the extraordinary **Interfaith Visions** and **Colman McCarthy** programs in August. Come for Memorial Weekend to reflect on "War and Memory – Creating a Legacy of Peace." (See program descriptions in the calendar pullout). Be in contact with us; let us know what you're doing in your own communities to contribute to positive change, and give us your thoughts about how The Mountain can do more.

Change and changelessness. In his book, *Walking with the Wind*, Rep. John Lewis wrote, "We will never reach the top of the mountain. The summit will always recede. It is not there to be reached. It is there to give us a direction, a goal. It is there to lead us higher."

On behalf of Trustees, staff, and perhaps most importantly, on behalf of the generations to come for whom we continually reach toward the summit, I ask you to participate, engage, and give . . . your time, your thoughts, your money. We all can and must work together.

Heraklitos of Ephesos wrote, "Whosoever wishes to know about the world must learn about it in its particular details. Knowledge is not intelligence. In searching for the truth be ready for the unexpected: change alone is unchanging."

The Mountain is about change and changelessness." Join us on the journey.

Tom

By: Ed Mangiafico

I See a World Coming

I believe that this is the most exciting and promising time in the life of The Mountain. These days, when I (and many of us) feel cynical about what's happening in the world around us, it is the vision and work of The Mountain that gives me hope and encouragement.

I am truly transformed, not just by the venue, but because the energy and effort of the staff is clear in the eyes of the people I see as they experience The Mountain. They then go out into their world with a conviction and message of Peace and Justice that will multiply by their interactions with others. As we broaden our vision of Peace and the justice it requires with new partners, the message and The Mountain grow exponentially.

Thus, from Meditation Rock and the top of the tower, I see a world coming. Young people going through The Mountain experience, those they touch, and their children in generations to come will create the world I see. It is a world at Peace based on the principle of "the inherent worth and dignity of every person" with true justice for all.

This is why I am pleased and proud to serve on The Mountain Board supporting the efforts of our staff. And this is why it is particularly meaningful to me to contribute my time and money to The Mountain.

Editor's note: Ed Mangiafico is currently an appointed Trustee of the Board.



Back row L to R: Ed Mangiafico, Tony Stringer (Chair), Tom Warth (CEO/President), Terry Flesher, R.K. Whitehead, and Mary Spivey. Front row L to R: Janice Marie Johnson, John Blevins, Randy Whitt, Betty Holcomb, and Suzie Armstrong.

PERSPECTIVES and TESTIMONIALS

"I know you are asking today 'how long will it take?' I come to say to you this afternoon, however difficult the moment, however frustrating the hour, it will not be long because truth pressed to the earth will rise again. How long? Not long because no lie can live forever. How long? Not long because you will reap what you sow. How long? Not long because the arm of the moral universe is long but it bends towards justice."

Martin Luther King Jr.
1965 Montgomery, Alabama State House steps
March from Selma to Montgomery

"On behalf of Johnson C. Smith University and the Student Support Services Program (SSS), we wish to again express our sincere thanks to you and all the staff at The

Mountain for making it possible for our students to experience your exceptional program. Our SSS students are first generation students who often come to us as 'Empty Vessels,' waiting and anticipating the fulfillment of a dream many thought was impossible. Your mission 'to embrace the diversity of life, creating an environment to energize people to work for positive change' was accomplished. I closely observed students as they began to work as a team, strategize, provide encouragement and recognize the impact of negative behavior on others. Most importantly, they were able to begin the process of critical thinking and conflict resolution to solve problems. We look forward to a long-term partnership between JCSU and The Mountain."

Cathy Jones, Director of Student Support Services,
Johnson C. Smith University

LEADERSHIP MATTERS

By: Helen Bishop

Leading Toward Peace

No matter what definition of "leadership" we use, many of us probably understand leadership to involve movement toward something. How can we as individuals contribute to movement toward peace in a world that seems to be going in a different direction.

Leadership skills that help individuals and organizations work toward peace include:

- Providing and maintaining a sense of hope
- Linking intentions and activities
- Planning for implementation as we go along
- Helping people adjust to external realities
- Using effective communication strategies

To help other people maintain a sense of hope, we need to strengthen our own. Sometimes circumstances in the larger world seem overwhelming, and every leader needs to know how to choose hope over despair. Whether we do that through reflecting on the words of great leaders such as Gandhi or Martin Luther King, Jr., or through music or art, or through meditation or prayer, we can build up a storehouse of hope to tap into when the actions of others might tempt us to despair about whether we can ever achieve peace in the world. We

can, and we must!

Intentions and activities should match in all levels, including setting aside time and resources, finding others with whom to collaborate, and using peaceful means to achieve peaceful ends. As you consider activities that contribute to peace, we need to plan for how to implement them in our organizations at the same time. Sometimes the links between intentions and implementation can be daunting.

External realities include the fact that other people have very different ideas about how to achieve peace. Collaborating with them may involve giving up our desire that our own path be the one selected. Resources are always more limited than you might wish, so prioritizing our efforts is important, too.

Communicating our intentions and plans effectively helps create strong partnerships between ourselves and other advocates for peace, leveraging scarce resources as we do so. We need to build in feedback loops to be sure that our intentions match the realities of how things are being implemented.

We can all work for peace, inside ourselves, our communities, and the world at large.

"... we can build up a storehouse of hope to tap into when the actions of others might tempt us to despair about whether we can ever achieve peace in the world."

UUCA Music Festival

New and Improved Music Festival! Reawaken to Live Music!

The Unitarian Universalist Church of Atlanta invites you to the Cliff Valley Winter Revival on February 12, 2005, from 2 pm to 8 pm. *Proceeds from the event will support The Mountain Retreat & Learning Centers.*

The event will be hosted by Atlanta comedian **Rob Cleveland**, and will include the music of **Jim Tolles & Magic Truck Band**, **Chicago Joe Jones Blues Band**, **Johnny Roquemore & The Hill Folk** (a *Creative Loafing* Best of Atlanta Singer/Songwriter), Decatur's own **Blue Gravy**, **Tucker Station String Band**, **Fern Creek**, and a special appearance by the **UUCA Quartet**.

The expanded music selection spans from blues to urban bluegrass (if you're not sure what that is, you have to come to find out!). It will be a family-friendly event with children's activities, as well as childcare (available by reservation). For more information, contact **Laura Yamashita**, 404-320-7034 or LauraYama@aol.com.

Plan to come and enjoy great music and community, and support The Mountain. Thank you UUCA and Cliff Valley Winter Revival!

YOUTH & YOUNG ADULT MATTERS

By: Katy Love

Continuing The Mountain Magic

Some of us younger Mountain folk don't get a chance to regularly visit The Mountain after camp has ended.

We spend our precious summers there as campers, Ascenders, CITs and Counselors, but rarely go back to The Mountain at any other time of the year. Luckily for us, The Mountain Counselor/Ascender/CIT reunion is a new tradition. This past September, over Labor Day weekend, about 20 former MountainCamp staffers met for the first reunion.

I arrived at The Mountain after a 12-hour ride from DC on Friday afternoon with my boyfriend, Ben Gerhardtstein, whom I met as a counselor in 1999. We toddled our way up the mountain, gawking at new roads and remodeled cabins, and the lush greenery everywhere. When we headed to Community Social Time at Heritage Hall, lo and behold, old counselors and former campers sat on the porch! We all spent our first night reminiscing about sweet days gone by.

On Saturday, we enjoyed Morning Circle, walks in the "cabbage patch," lake play, and favorite field games. Our afternoon was spent as a group at Tarzan Falls – an incredible place near The Mountain. We crawled across a river to a set of beautiful falls, swam in the lagoon and wriggled behind the falls. The weather was gorgeous, and the setting was familiar, comfortable and re-invigorating. That evening, we piled into the Tree House to hear Lee Knight perform favorites like "Poor Man," "Candle to the Wind," and "Some-

times I Win." I was amazed that no one seems to have changed much: we are still the same slap-game-loving, Silly Song singing, progressive agenda-pushing people we were long ago. And MountainCamp continues to thrive, now led by counselors who were our former campers!

When we held our closing goodbye

circle the following morning, I was overcome with the familiar feeling of lingering sadness. But we can all come back—and we can bring others with us the next time (those of you who did not

attend were greatly missed and remembered). The feelings we share at The



2004 CITs and Leadership Team members adventuring together.

Mountain are not confined to a few weeks in the summer. We can return to The Mountain and the friends we love during the year—and take The Mountain home with us in our hearts.

The Mountain is committed to involving youth in its future. It is the younger generations who will carry The Mountain forward and will, one day, take the lead. The Mountain staff members are eager for our input and commitment, and now the Counselor Reunion will be an annual Labor Day weekend event. The reunion will begin Friday, September 2, 2005 and, like this year, it will be affordable. The reunion is about getting us back together and beginning the dialogue of how we can be involved—with The Mountain and each other—throughout the year. So, please stay in touch.

Contribute to this column; tell us how you want to be involved in The Mountain's future, tell us how The Mountain continues to affect you and inspire you during the year. We want to hear about where you are in your life, what you're doing, and all of your contact information. We must remember—and act on—our strong commitment to continuing that "Mountain Magic." To get involved or update us on you, email Katy Love at Katy.Love@gmail.com or Gillian Denham at gillian.denham@mountaincenters.org. We are excited about hearing from you soon!



Former counselors Katy Love and Ben Gerhardtstein, at Tullulah Falls.

Simply Living Peace

Making Peace with our Earth

By: Carole Ann Mackey

When we think of peacemaking, it is usually about stopping wars, resolving conflicts and generally making the world a better place. To me, making peace begins within myself and my connection to the natural environment.

Since the early 70s, I have considered myself a "tree hugging granola head." I give myself this title because I grow



Carole Ann and Kurt's house.

"weird" things like sprouts and yogurt on my kitchen countertop, have an organic garden, attend Audubon Society meetings, and practice the "leave no trace behind" philosophy on our numerous camping trips. These actions reveal my love, respect, awe of our beautiful world and my fears, concerns and dreads about what humanity is doing to our Mother Earth.

Coming to the mountains and "The Mountain" seems a natural personal evolution for me. The beautiful vistas, unspoiled stand of ancient white oaks, and Mission and Vision match my values and desire to live closer to the earth. Since I began working at The Mountain, my lifestyle has changed dramatically. I left the hectic city life and moved to a slower paced rural lifestyle. My partner, **Kurt Fisher**, and I are building a house on 8 acres of land in Scaly Mountain, North Carolina. To us, it's more than a house: we are building a lifestyle in cooperation with and respect for the Earth.

We are integrating as many "green building" methods as possible, given building codes and budget restraints. The house is post-and-beam construction with walls made from bales of wheat straw (yes, **straw**) covered with an earthen plaster (yes, **dirt!**). This is the first straw bale house in the county and eighth in the state. Our building methods may seem unconventional or extreme, but in fact they are based on very ancient building traditions still practiced in many countries. Some of



*Sharing our
"Songs"*

the other earth friendly elements include:

- The South-facing house takes advantage of passive solar heating and lighting in the winter.
- Nestled in the side of a hill, it appears to be growing from the earth.
- Much of the lumber has been milled from trees harvested in the footprint area.
- Earth plaster walls and earthen floors are made with clay and water from the property and horse manure gathered from a nearby farm.
- The bermed earth on the north side foundation protects the house from winter winds.
- Our Living Roof will be planted with native plants, sedums, and herbs.
- Reed fencing is used as ceiling material in some rooms.
- Some windows are made from recycled bottles and cob (a heavy clay plaster).
- The Mountain's Senior High campers made straw-clay bricks for some interior walls and bookcases.
- Handmade pottery vessel sinks in all baths and guest bedroom were made by Kurt.
- Our tool shed is covered with the slabs of felled trees.

The unique design parallels the patterns of nature.

Curved walls and round rooms give a feeling of warmth and comfort. The energy gently flows through the rooms. A wide expanse of windows



2004 ASCENDERS and their straw-clay bricks.

visually brings the outdoors inside. Our goal is to do more than simply using materials and techniques that are earth-friendly. Our desire is to create a place of peace with our Earth: a sanctuary for all that enter.

If you want to learn more about green building and living at peace with our earth, please email me for a list of resources: **Carole Ann Mackey**, Logistics & Program Coordinator carole.mackey@mountaincenters.org

By: Pamela Courtney, Volunteer Coordinator

You Can Make a Difference *Volunteer at The Mountain!*

We are inspired by the constant feedback from our many friends who invest time and energy helping The Mountain. They tell us that they – and most volunteers in today's world – don't just want to contribute their time, they want to make a **difference**.

So, we joyfully accept the challenge from our volunteers to give more people the opportunity to make a difference here at The Mountain. At the same time, we are addressing the organizational need to provide meaningful programs, and more of them, while continuing to offer the outstanding quality and service we've all come to expect – with fewer year-round staff.



Volunteers contributed thousands of hours of work to The Mountain in 2004.

Therefore, we consider it exciting news that we need many more volunteers in 2005 and beyond to serve as Program Hosts! Volunteer Hosts have demonstrated time and time again that they are willing and able to serve in high

profile program roles. This year we're "formalizing" the role that has been evolving for the past few years: we'll be asking many of our Hosts to be the primary "face of The Mountain" during their programs. Of course, we'll provide the tools and training you'll need . . . and we'll be there to support you throughout your service.

Volunteers at The Mountain . . .

- Enhance and strengthen the quality of our programs.
- Share knowledge and skills with others – including staff!
- Inspire others as they learn new skills and refine old ones.
- Meet new people and get reacquainted with old friends.
- Make a difference to The Mountain, its guests and staff alike!

So Mark Your Calendars!

The Mountain will host its annual Volunteer Host Training, January 21-23, 2005. During the training weekend, our staff will work with you to coordinate your volunteer experiences at The Mountain in 2005. Please bring your calendar in order to make your commitment before the end of the weekend.

If you'd like to be part of Volunteer Host Training, contact **Pamela Courtney** at 828-526-5838, ext. 263 or pamela.courtney@mountaincenters.org. Your efforts truly will make a great difference – and we thank you in advance!

From Our Volunteers:

"I like to work on repair or building projects because I can see what I've accomplished each time I go. For example, I built the bear-proof garbage storage area at the end of the craft barn. I was there in October to see how it was holding up. Not bad! I helped build the ramp down to Cabin 13, which was quite an effort. I want to further the goals and objectives of The Mountain. By volunteering, I can help make a small step in that direction."

— Volunteer of Note, Bob Hargrove

"It's only another gift shop," I declared. "Seen enough of those." "Oh why not go," she said. Up! Up! Up! We went.

"The view secured the deal. We volunteer and you allow us to enjoy this awesome beauty. We talk to interesting people from around the globe and share new ideas. We don't always agree about the world, but what fun we have in trying. We thank you for this opportunity to share ideas and meet these wonderful folks.

"We know that we have received much more than we have given, but we shall continue trying to give as best we can."

— Ron and Pat Overlet, drove by the entrance of The Mountain and decided to venture up.

Calendar at a Glance

NEW IN 2005 Personal Retreats for Spiritual Rest and Renewal

Whether on sabbatical, or needing some quiet meditative time on your own, The Mountain is the perfect setting for your Personal Retreat. Please call our **Guest Services Office** for a flier so you can design your own package.

828-526-5838, ext. 0; info@mountaincenters.org.

(Personal Retreats available on a year-round basis as space permits).



"And a Peaceful Joy surrounds The Mountain, and it reaches far beyond the sea, and it dances through the desert to become part of me . . ."

1985, S. J. Denham , "A Peaceful Joy"



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