

# THE Mountain matters

Energizing people to work for positive change

THE MOUNTAIN RETREAT & LEARNING CENTERS, INC.

October 2003

## INSIDE

Volunteers Once Again	
Make a Difference .....	3
Youth Programming .....	3
Giving .....	4
Birmingham, Michigan	
Congregation .....	4
A Lasting Legacy .....	5
Positions Available .....	5
Holiday Programs .....	6
Holiday Programs	
Registration Form .....	7



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## Paying Attention to the Creative Tensions

In the last issue of *The Mountain Matters*, I talked about the first two sections of The Mountain's mission – "Embracing the diversity of life, creating an environment" – and said I would focus this edition's article on the end of the mission statement – "to energize people to work for positive change." I am going to hold off on this until the next edition. Instead, I want to deal with the very real challenges we are now facing: the creative tensions between The Mountain's "current realities" and its visions.

Coincidentally, I am writing this article on September 11, the second anniversary of 9/11/01. Along with many of you, I watched a number of news reports and documentaries these past couple of days. Somehow, although sitting here on this safe and remote Mountain, I feel more strongly connected than ever to the larger world. Columnist Leonard Pitts wrote right after the events of 9/11/01: "We will never again be without September 11th. The only thing we can do now is learn to be with it." I agree we must learn to be with it, but we must also learn from it.

The lesson of 9/11 for me is that we are a global community. It isn't just "we" Americans, but we humankind. It's not just about **our** issues – **we** were attacked, **our** freedoms are at risk, **our** economy took a hit – it's about people not at peace with each other, the world community not at peace with itself.

A journalist writing about the Wilmington Race Riots at the end of the 1800s said, "A whole person's life, their whole integrity, comes down to little moments when they could have done the right thing but didn't . . . because they weren't paying attention." The Mountain is about paying attention — to our youth, to people of all faiths, cultures, orientations, ability. It's about listening to each other's stories and lifting up the good in everyone. It's about the little moments.

I believe the global community needs The Mountain, and other organizations with similar vision and determination, to pay attention. The creative tension between lowering the vision or bringing current reality into line with the vision is very real. And right now, The Mountain is paying attention to closing the gap between current financial realities and the vision of this organization as an active participant in the global community.

Author Peter Senge, in his book *The Fifth Discipline*, writes the following:

When we hold a vision that differs from current reality, a gap exists (the creative tension) which can be resolved in two ways. One way is to take actions to bring reality into line with the vision. But changing reality takes time so we often lower the vision instead. . . . But a onetime reduction in the vision usually isn't the end of the story. Sooner or later new pressures pulling reality away from the (new, lowered) vision arise, leading to still more pressures to lower the vision

*If you believe in this place,  
its mission and vision and its  
transformative work, then I  
ask three things of you –  
Participate, Tell and Give!*

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: 2003

Tony Stringer	Chair
John Blevins	Relationships
Gini Courter	Finance
Jean Findley	Financial Advisor
Betty Holcomb	Relationships
Janice Marie Johnson	Mission
Ed Mangiafico	Planning
Bruce Parrish	Recording Secretary
Darwin Smith	Development
R. K. Whitehead	Planning
Tom Warth	President

## RESOURCE NETWORK

Rosemary Bray McNatt	New York
Jeanne Shirly	Arizona

Continued from page 1

Simply stated, The Mountain's current realities are that revenues and development gifts have been significantly down for the last two years while expenses have continued to grow. Although we are seeing some turnaround this fall in revenue, the future is not clear. Thus, we have been faced with the creative tension requiring us to choose between lowering our vision or bringing our realities more in line with those visions.

If we heed Senge's words – and we do – then lowering the vision isn't an option. We remain clear and committed to our vision of “being a relevant institution, for generations to come, actively participating in the creation of a transformed society.” Bringing the realities in line with this vision is the focus of our energies. Therefore, I want to share what we are doing – and I am asking you to be involved.

On the revenue side, we are developing new leadership and youth/young adult programs and identifying new markets for our offerings. We will be increasing our marketing, sales, publications and web presence. We're beginning to see positive responses to some of these initiatives.

On the expense side, we have recognized that although we are open year-round, we are basically a two-season business – April through October, and November through March. So we are realigning our staff, creating a smaller “low season” staff and using more seasonal staff, volunteers and interns to meet the demands of “high season.” We are also looking at other ways to get expense out of our business in the “low season” **without** compromising guest service. We are optimistic that these changes will bring expenses more in line with the reality of our seasonal business.

So – there will be no lowering of the vision; instead we are “raising the bar” on current realities (revenue up, expenses down).

What can you do to help? If you believe in this place, its mission and vision and its transformative work, then I ask three (3) things of you – Participate, Tell and Give!

1. First – Participate. Come to The Mountain, attend a program, volunteer or just drop in, but come and be a part of the work.
2. Second – Tell others about The Mountain. Tell them about our youth and Elderhostel programs, about leadership schools and about our fine meeting facilities. Most of you are affiliated with organizations that are looking for quality places to have their retreats. Tell them about The Mountain – they will be well served, you will be proud of your referral.
3. And lastly — **Give!** This is the time to make, renew or extend your financial commitment to the Mountain. These are serious times and we **NEED** your financial support. Now. The Mountain is doing all it can to deal with the realities. The work we do is vital, we need you to be with us. Participate, Tell and Give. It's time. I look forward to, and deeply appreciate your partnership.

*Tom*

**Great Opportunity for a 2003 Tax Deduction - The Mountain Needs a Truck!**  
**Wanted: 4WD full-size, short-bed 3/4 to 1 ton pick-up truck for use with heavy towing trailer and snow plow. Please call or email Larry Wheeler 828-526-5838, ext. 230, [larry.wheeler@mountaincenters.org](mailto:larry.wheeler@mountaincenters.org).**

## Volunteers Once Again Make a Difference!

In the past few months we have had several "long-stay" volunteers help with mountain jobs:

**Brownie French** – 7 weeks in the Office

**Paul French** – 7 weeks on construction

**Jamie Dice** – 4 weeks in the kitchen and programming

**Fran Spicer** – 5+ weeks in the kitchen (coming back in October)

**Margaret Yankowski** – 4 weeks in the Office

**Irene Ratner** – 4+ weeks in Programming

**Elaine Comegys** – currently in the middle of 8 weeks in the Office

**Marilyn Lovell** – due soon for 4 weeks in Programming



Jamie Dice

To say that these folks make a difference is an understatement. We have need every week of the year for volunteers of all types and durations of stay, but ones who can commit to multiple weeks are that much more valuable because they learn their jobs in depth.

Interested? Please contact **Larry Wheeler** and let him get you set up to become a volunteer in the next few months. His phone and email are: (828) 526-5838, ext. 230,

[larry.wheeler@mountaincenters.org](mailto:larry.wheeler@mountaincenters.org).



BUC participants Boris & Eric Silberberg working on Chapel Ramp.

## Youth Programming – The Backbone, Heart and Soul of The Mountain

*"I remember growing up and passing through my adolescence. It was a difficult process and I was so angry and misdirected. The Mountain was one of the few things that kept me grounded and reminded me that there was still peace, love, and justice in the world. The best part of youth camp is being able to share the love I've felt here with others whose lives may be as turbulent as mine."*



ASCENDERS Sarah Eble and Garrett Tallent ramping to renovated Walden cabin.

So wrote one of our young adult counselors who served the 2003 Youth Camp mentoring youth from 1st to 12th grades. We talk about how youth are the backbone of The Mountain's programming – indeed, they are the **future** of this very special place.

You recently received a mailing which highlighted comments from many of our counselors about their summer here. If you haven't read it, now might be a good time to do so – we think you'll appreciate their heartwarming stories! If you'd like another copy, don't hesitate to email or call **Larry Wheeler**, [larry.wheeler@mountaincenters.org](mailto:larry.wheeler@mountaincenters.org), (828) 526-5838, ext. 230.

We hope you'll be generous in supporting our work with youth. You can also use the coupon on the envelope included with this special development edition of **The Mountain Matters**. Your gift will help with scholarships, leadership training, upgrading equipment, improving technology, and youth staff compensation. Your commitment now is important – please ensure that our youth programming continues to be strong, safe, inspiring and inclusive.



## GIVING

GIFTS SINCE LAST ISSUE

### *Our profound thanks to . . .*

#### **Rhododendron Vision Holders (\$20,000 - \$24,999)**

Pat McGiverin, Palm Harbour, FL  
Marcia Bystrom, Muscle Shoals, AL

#### **Mountain Laurel Vision Holders (\$15,000 - \$19,999)**

Marty Beech, Eastpoint, FL  
Susan & Charles Kimball, Boca Raton, FL

#### **Flame Azalea Vision Holders (\$10,000 - \$14,999)**

Linda Winn Brown & Charles Brown, Tallahassee, FL

#### **Patron Members (\$5,000 - \$9,999)**

Darla & Scott Davis, Harrisburg, NC  
Lillian & Walter Dean, Huntington Woods, MI  
Carole Colley, Gainesville, FL  
Mark Evans, Knoxville, TN

#### **Life Members (\$2,000 - \$2,500)**

Sue Boone, Highlands, NC  
John & Pat Hammer, Birmingham, MI  
Betty Holcomb, Chicago, IL  
Jim & Liz Key, Beaufort, SC  
Bob & Ruth Straus, Lexington, KY

#### **Special Gifts/Gifts-In-Kind/General Fund (Gifts of \$250+)**

(Note: All gifts of \$1,000+ shown with \*\*)

Edith Aliberti, Havelock, NC  
Birmingham Unitarian Church Work Project,  
Birmingham, MI\*\*  
Dan & Sue Boyce, Bloomfield Hills, MI  
Nancy Combs-Morgan, Lexington, KY  
Susan & Robert Highfield, Quarryville, PA  
Alan Hutchinson, Evans, GA  
Katherine Johnson, Decatur, GA  
Irv & Millie Kagan, Atlanta, GA \*\*  
Thomas & Sandra Kester, Greenville, SC  
Bobbie & Jim Littlefield, Blacksburg, VA  
Merrill & Charlotte Palmer, Clemson, SC  
Grace Rising & Allan Kurche, Royal Oak, MI  
John & Susan Stoll, Bloomfield Hills, MI\*\*

#### **New or Renewed Short-Term Loans or Promissory Notes**

Anonymous  
Frank Clipp, Clemson, SC  
Darla & Scott Davis, Harrisburg, NC  
Carol & Dick Fencl, Cincinnati, OH  
Sarah Hargrove, Raleigh, NC  
Margart Ann Hogue, Grovetown, GA  
The Mountain Endowment Fund, Highlands, NC  
Tom & Jane Warth, Highlands, NC

#### **Endowment (President's Society)**

Anonymous  
Steve Hollingsworth & Daidee Springer, Chattanooga, TN  
Hal Reed, Orlando, FL



### *In Memoriam*

**Dave King**, Brooksville, FL (July 2003)  
**Nancy Perkins**, Nashville, TN (August 2003)

## **Birmingham, Michigan Congregation**

### *Helping Hands for Accessibility!*

Did you know that the record-holding congregation for week-long retreats at The Mountain is Birmingham, **MICHIGAN**? They've experienced 8 retreats since 1982. So much for "The Mountain is too far away!" In August, over 100 BUC members came to The Mountain – but they wanted more than just fun, so they "built" an afternoon work project into their schedule.



Facilities Director, **Ian Denham**, was ready for these ambitious "Michiganders" with plans and materials to extend the ramp from the edge of the Tower to the remodeled building next to it – our new Chapel in the woods. Not only did they do all of the work – they also donated funds for the materials. In fact, they gave over \$3,000, providing extra money for the Chapel itself.

On your next trip here, admire the handiwork of these generous BUC volunteers as you walk (or wheel) along the ramp to the Chapel. And spend some time in the Chapel itself – built by Ian Denham and other staff and volunteer workers. They transformed an unused building into a lovely place for spiritual reflection.

## A Lasting Legacy – Endow Your Annual Gifts Through a Planned Gift

By Hal Reed, Chair

In a world often filled with turmoil and disharmony, the vision and mission of the Mountain Retreat & Learning Centers serves as an antidote to the lack of peace with which we're often confronted.

The only way The Mountain is able to continue its unique role in our lives and those of thousands of others is through annual and special gifts made to support the mission and heritage of this important center. Did you realize you can continue your annual gifts perpetually, even after your death, by "endowing" your gifts through a planned gift from your estate to the Mountain Endowment Fund?

For example, say you have been striving to make gifts of around \$1,000 each year to The Mountain. A planned gift from your estate, such as a bequest or life insurance designation, in the amount of \$20-25,000 will allow your \$1,000 annual gift to continue perpetually. That's because the Mountain Endowment Fund, whose sole purpose is to support The Mountain Retreat & Learning Centers, is designed to produce an annual "spendable income" distribution to The Mountain of about 5% of the principal value of the endowment. And since the overall goal of the Endowment Fund is to invest in a way that seeks return over time of more than 5%, the principal of the endowment is preserved.

But what if you have wished you could give even more – say \$5,000 annually – to The Mountain, but never felt you could quite swing it? You can establish that \$5,000 annually through a planned gift to the Endowment Fund. If you are able to leave a bequest or other planned gift to the Mountain

Endowment Fund in the amount of \$100,000, this will produce about a \$5,000 annual distribution to The Mountain Retreat & Learning Centers on a perpetual basis. What a meaningful legacy to leave to future generations who will benefit from The Mountain's special mission.

A planned gift set up during our lifetimes to "endow" our annual gifts shows great foresight. **To include a gift from your estate, the following designation should be used: The Mountain Endowment Fund, Inc., Highlands, North Carolina.** For assistance or more information, contact **Larry Wheeler** at (828) 526-5838, ext. 230 or via e-mail at [larry.wheeler@mountaincenters.org](mailto:larry.wheeler@mountaincenters.org). If you've already included us in your estate plans and haven't yet informed us, please let us know so we can include you as a member of the President's Society.

### A special thank you to the Members of the Board of Directors of the Mountain Endowment Fund

Chair	<b>Hal Reed</b> , Orlando, FL
Corp. Secretary	<b>Paul Clipp</b> , Clemson, SC
Treasurer	<b>Neal Andreae</b> , Hendersonville, NC
Members	<b>Harry Donavon</b> , McKinney, TX
	<b>Kay Giese</b> , Athens, GA
	<b>Bob Hornberger</b> , Gainesville, FL
	<b>Frony Ward</b> , Knoxville, TN
	<b>R. K. Whitehead</b> , Braselton, GA
	<b>John Wood</b> , Hellertown, PA
Recording Secretary	<b>Anne Staley</b> , Marietta, GA

### Positions Available

The Mountain is seeking two motivated team players to join the year-round staff. Both positions require candidates who are committed to the Mission and Vision of The Mountain, have experience and strong people and organizational skills. Relocation to The Mountain will be necessary. The Mountain is an equal opportunity employer.

#### Director of Development

**Primary Responsibilities:** To generate \$500,000 in annual gifts and assist in raising additional \$300,000 in special gifts; serve as a member of the Executive staff team.

Send letter of interest, resume and list of references to:

Tom Warth, President

[tom.warth@mountaincenters.org](mailto:tom.warth@mountaincenters.org)

The Mountain Retreat & Learning Centers, Inc. • P. O. Box 1299 • Highlands, NC 28741-1299

#### Sales Manager

**Primary Responsibility:** To generate revenue in line with budget through creative, energetic sales efforts.

Send letter of interest, resume and list of references to:

Shelley Denham, Director of Marketing & Sales

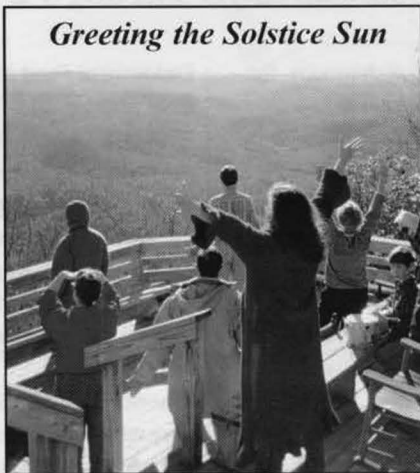
[shelley.denham@mountaincenters.org](mailto:shelley.denham@mountaincenters.org)

## Holiday Programs

### A Magical Winter Solstice December 19 - 21, 2003

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. Together we'll become a unique community, making candles and luminarias, learning the history of labyrinths, and then creating, and experiencing our own (outdoors or indoors, depending on weather). We'll also explore Celtic traditions of Winter Solstice and the lighting of the sacred fire. Of course there will be time for walking, hiking or other introspective activities you'll choose on your own. Please give yourself a gift of peace and wonder by participating in Winter Solstice at The Mountain.

### *Greeting the Solstice Sun*



### MountainCamp in Winter – Senior High Winter Break December 26 - 28, 2003!

So you'll have been out of school for about a week ... Hannukah, Christmas are over ... and you're getting really homesick for your Mountain friends from camps and CONS. Think about it – family councils, morning circles, evening worships, time to reconnect and play and remember who you REALLY are in your safe and fun-filled Mountain community. Are you ready for MountainCamp? Come on "home" this winter and reconnect! We need a minimum of 15 youth to run this special program – and you need to register by

**November 1** so we can invite some of our favorite counselors and PALS back to hang out with you. Let's do Mountain-Camp in Winter – and start an annual tradition!

### **New Year's At The Mountain Celebrations – this year you have THREE options from which to choose!**

#### **Option 1: Let's Pretend It's New Year's I December 26 - 28, 2003**

Don't want to travel mid-week for New Year's Eve celebrations? Then come to The Mountain the weekend **before** for "Let's Pretend It's New Years I."

#### **Option 2: Let's Pretend It's New Year's Too! January 1 - 3, 2004**

Join the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Metro Atlanta North (UUMAN) for a fun-filled and thoughtful program centering around bringing one year to a close and opening another.

#### **Program elements common to both "Let's Pretend" weekends:**

- Plenty of time for participants to enjoy The Mountain, taking some time away from your regular routines to reflect on the meaning in your life, your understanding and commitment to justice, and what is most important to you
- Time to build community
- A very special workshop offered by The Mountain's Helen Bishop, focusing on what we might be called

to do to fulfill our role as advocates for justice by connecting our principles and values to justice work

- Candlemaking and creating luminarias
- Creating and using a labyrinth (indoors or outdoors, depending on the weather)
- Opportunities for walking, hiking, snow tubing (weather permitting – it might not be cold enough!), quiet times by the fireplace for reading, puzzles and games, or finding that special place to relax and think about your plans for the new year
- Not-Necessarily-Talented Show and "Let's Pretend It's New Year's Eve" party
- Before we depart, we'll share an intergenerational closing ceremony, readying ourselves to go home and embrace a new year

#### **Option 3: New Year's at The Mountain December 30, 2003 - January 1, 2004**

There's just nothing quite like celebrating the closing of one year and the beginning of the next at The Mountain, amid the quiet, scenic wonders of this place. Please join us as we

Continued on page 8





# 2003 HOLIDAY REGISTRATION FORM

EB = Early Bird (deadline 12/1/03)  
Reg = Regular Rate  
Infants 0-3 attend for FREE

- A Magical Winter Solstice – Dec. 19 - 21, 2003
- MountainCamp in Winter - Sr. High Winter Break – Dec. 26 - 28, 2003
- Let's Pretend It's New Year's I – Dec. 26 - 28, 2003
- New Year's at The Mountain – Dec. 30, 2003 - Jan. 1, 2004
- Let's Pretend It's New Year's Too! – Jan. 1 - 3, 2003

For all Holiday Programs	EB	Reg
Adults (per person)	\$130	\$160
Youth 12-17	\$70	\$85
Youth 4-11	\$60	\$75
MountainCamp in Winter	\$80	\$95

Registrant: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Congregation/Organization (no acronyms please) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Evening Phone: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ Day Phone: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_  
 E-mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Enter names of ALL registrants as you want them to appear on namelists:

Adults	Gender	Fees	Life Member?	Youth, children, infants	Age	Gender	Fees
Total Fees				Total Fees			

◆ Housing preferences are not guaranteed but honored by date registration is received. Prices include lodging, programs, and meals. We may assign you a roommate if you do not come with one, or request one. There is a \$32 surcharge per night for private single room, if available.

Private room requested  
 Roommate Preference (if not registering together): \_\_\_\_\_  
 Bed Preference (subject to availability): Twin \_\_\_\_\_ Double (for 2) \_\_\_\_\_ Crib \_\_\_\_\_  
 Mobility Considerations: \_\_\_\_\_



**Dietary Information:**  
 Omnivore       Vegetarian

The Mountain's Food Services serves three delicious, healthy meals (served buffet style) each day. Due to the volume of food that we prepare, we cannot create individual meals for our guests with special dietary needs. You may need to bring your own food items for special needs.

**FULL PAYMENT IS DUE AT REGISTRATION.** Amount Enclosed: \$\_\_\_\_\_. Your check payable to **The Mountain** is preferred; *Visa* and *MasterCard* can be used by legibly printing your complete card number and expiration date below, and signing the space provided.  
**Cancellation Policy:** Individuals who cancel 30+ days before the program will have 75% of their fees refunded; those who cancel 29-15 days before the program will have 50% of their fees refunded; and those who cancel 14 days or less before the program will not receive a refund. All individual cancellations requesting a refund must be made in writing. A minimum nonrefundable processing fee of \$35 per adult registrant and \$20 for youth will be charged.

Visa/MasterCard #: \_\_\_\_\_ Expiration Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Print Name (as appears on card): \_\_\_\_\_ Amount \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
 Cardholder's signature: \_\_\_\_\_ 10/03

Office use only:	Payment received:	Housing:	Data:	Confirmed:
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Holiday Programs – Continued from page 6



*Enjoying making candles and luminarias.*

build community together in the unique environment of The Mountain. In a very special workshop, The Mountain's **Helen Bishop** will focus on connecting principles and values to justice work. We'll also participate in candlemaking, creating luminarias, and of course, walking and hiking in the clear, crisp mountain air. Weather permitting (it may not be cold enough!), the more adventurous among us will trek down to Scaly for some snow tubing. And this year, we're offering the Not-Necessarily-Talented-Show – so get your act together. Of course, there will be the lovely quiet times by the fire for puzzles and games, and our traditional toasting and singing in the New Year.

**For all 3 New Year's programs, there will be some child care/youth programming provided if requested by the Early Bird deadline – December 1, 2003.**

**REGISTER RIGHT AWAY** to assure your place in one (or more!) of these popular programs, using the form on page 7.

## MountainCamp 2004

*Watch for the Brochure coming to your mailbox in November! Get ready for MountainCamp 2004!*

### Help with our Mail List.

If you received 2 copies of *The Mountain Matters*, please call 828-526-5838, ext. 0 or email [info@mountaincenters.org](mailto:info@mountaincenters.org) so we can correct our database.

## THE MOUNTAIN RETREAT & LEARNING CENTERS, INC.

P. O. Box 1299  
Highlands, NC 28741

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