

A Visit to the Cottage Retreat Center in Jackson

By Petula Brown

Serenity. Reflection. Mindfulness. States of mind attainable from a vibrant institution located within minutes of downtown Jackson. At the Cottage Retreat Center (<http://www.cottageretreat.org/>), visitors are embraced by an oasis of tranquility that aims to be accessible to “all who look for spiritual enrichment in a peaceful, quiet and serene setting.” As the Center celebrates its first anniversary within a 2,100 square foot, unassuming house in the midst of the Jackson historical district, it continues to evolve to accommodate a broad spectrum of activities that support holistic health and well being.

Helping visitors “connect the mind, body and spirit to strengthen the whole person” was an early goal of The Center, according to Executive Director Nancy Angelo, a pastoral minister from Oregon with over twenty years of experience. Angelo’s vision was sparked by the 9/11 attacks and the general “sense of spiritual dis-ease” left in the aftermath. In her quest to “give people a place to find quiet and get in touch with spirituality,” Angelo’s concept, a variety of spirituality-focused programs hosted by various community sites, received non-profit status in late 2002. Although a welcomed community resource, the lack of a permanent site was a logistical challenge and limited The Center’s ability to stay true to its mission. By spring 2004, The Center found a home in a house on West Michigan Avenue built in the 1920’s that had previous lives as a personal residence, real estate business and a child care center.

With its permanent space, The Center is able to offer a variety of programs. Visitors may participate in physical activities like yoga, Feldenkrais, Tai Chi or massage classes. Others may prefer the intellectual discussions on spirituality or the mental respite available via



The Cottage Retreat Center - (from left to right) June Hinkle and Gordon Burbridge, Board Members, and Nancy Angelo, Executive Director and Founder.

Upcoming Events

Prayer Circle (every first and third Monday) – 9:30AM

Women’s Book Discussion Group (every other Monday) – 10:00AM – Noon

Yoga (every Tuesday) – 10:00– 11:30AM

Poetry at The Center - Every fourth Wednesday. 7:00 - 9:30 PM. Published and featured poets, open mic and discussion. \$4.00 Registration. Refreshments available.

Feldenkrais (every Thursday) – 4:00 - 5:30PM

Tai Chi (every Thursday) – 6:00 - 7:30PM

Massage (every Thursday by appointment) – 10:00AM – 3:00PM

Empower & Transform Relationships (Tuesdays, May 3 through 24) - 7:00-8:30PM

Cosmic Walk (Saturday, May 21) - 9:30-3:30PM

For more information, contact The Cottage Retreat Center (cottageretreat@sbcglobal.net or call 517-796-5670).

mediation sessions. While programs typically occur in autumn through spring, “one-to-one” spiritual mentoring is available throughout the year. While the Center offers a diversity of activities, they share a common thread – a focus on helping participants understand, explore and revitalize themselves. Such support has been embraced by retreatants and summarized by feedback shared by a recent event attendee, “I’ve been able to turn inwards and evaluate myself more than anything. It has been a reflective time for me and a time when I know I need to make changes.”

In addition to scheduled programs, retreatants may choose to utilize Center resources to engage in self-exploration and deepen spirituality. The Center’s library of spiritual resources is open for perusal or for visitors looking for quiet respite. Within the Donette Meditation Room, visitors may engage in private reflection or have prayer candles and remembrance cards prepared for any occasion. Donette Burke, a key member of The Center’s inner circle, died from cancer a year before The Center took occupancy of the house. The room’s earthy and subdued style is a testament to her influence on The Center.

A new concept to the Jackson area, The Center has brought “a very interesting blend of topics and speakers that haven’t been part of the Jackson scene” comments Monetta Harr, reporter for The Jackson Citizen Patriot. The Center has collaborated with a local museum on a children’s program and staff members facilitate poetry readings at a local homeless shelter. As The Center continues to evolve, there is an interest in subleasing the facility to provide a venue for other wellness practitioners as well as rental arrangements for private, day-long retreat programs. The Center’s outreach efforts reinforce a community focus highlighted by board member Penny Murray. “The Cottage Retreat Center” she comments “is about community... about people coming together on common ground... about people finding peace within themselves when the people of Earth are not at peace.”