



## From the Director, Dene Peterson

There is some progress with the construction. However, the weather continues to be unseasonably wet. I have a couple of sayings to deal with the lag: "The One in charge of the weather is in charge of the construction." The other, "We have the money, therefore it will get built!" As you read this newsletter you can see that ElderSpirit Community is receiving national publicity. Our goal is to have the reality match our image. We are still aiming for a completion date this Spring. 🏠

## The First Building!

We are happy to see walls going up on the first building. This is a clustered group of two homes, claimed since 2002 by Bill and Linda Mashburn (on the right) and Monica Appleby. Since the formal groundbreaking in March, 2002, we have been waiting to see buildings. Much dirt moving was required to create enough level area for this project. And we learned that clay dirt cannot be moved until it is really dry. Our best information about completion is that we may expect to move in July, 2005. 🏠



Rumschlag at the Abingdon office had responded to over 100 requests from 30 states and Canada. Headlines ranged from "Retired and Inspired" in Mississippi to "Growing old with grace" in California, "Exploring spirit part of plan" in Ohio and in New York "Former nun finds a new vocation: Retirement." Many of the papers included "on the Net – elderspirit.net" making quick contact possible for those interested.

A second wave of publicity came in November, with an article in the *AARP Bulletin*. This publication has a wide circulation, and inquiries have come from several states.

Some inquirers indicated that they agreed with the concept and values, but they hoped they could have a community like ElderSpirit in their own location. Some said that they have already begun to work on a project, and wish to consult with us about the steps to take.

Being recognized and responded to is a wake up call. Those who have been involved through the past ten years are ready to take another step on the journey. Mary Roten said "What we are doing is not creating a cookie cutter retirement place that is dropped on people." Interested people are the beginning of community. This is the time to interact with others who want to "grow old with grace." We do not have to wait until what is begun in Abingdon is complete and perfect.

ElderSpirit Community is eager to provide resources to other groups who share our values and interest. We are now working with a cohousing group in Boulder, CO, preparing two workshops for 2005. We encourage anyone interested in establishing a retirement community of mutual support and later-life spirituality to attend one of these workshops. A tentative plan is to have one in Boulder in March and one in Abingdon, VA in June. For current information see [www.abrahampais.com/ElderCohousing.htm](http://www.abrahampais.com/ElderCohousing.htm)

## A Wake Up Call for ElderSpirit Community

By Anne Leibig

Thanks to Chris Kahn of the Associated Press people all over the United States and Canada have been reading about ElderSpirit Community. Newspapers began including his article in July and by November Catherine



## Traveling Light: Journeys of Simplicity

By Marianne Boyle

Strains of 'Tis a Gift to be Simple and Jerusalem, My Destiny were often heard with voices raised on high during the Elderspirit Retreat at Jubilee House in Abingdon on Wednesday to Friday, September 1-2-3. Nearly forty people gathered to share, learn, meet, eat and celebrate. Jean Marie Luce emceed the retreat and skillfully led us from session to session with caring, humor and joy. We experienced poetry, music, prayer, gestures, drawing, writing, sharing, naps and wonderful meals. Intrigued by the theme of simplicity and eager to learn more about community seemed to be most peoples' reasons for attending this retreat. We had a few who want to start a similar community in their area. What a blessing!

After our Wednesday dinner, Carol Edwards took us through an exercise of remembering the creativity of our childhood. We got to draw and tell stories and recall with joy some of our neighborhood and family pastimes as young children. It was a delight to see the faces of all after this sharing.

Our evening prayer service was led by Rev. Jane Ayers. Outside in the garden, we listened to psalms and prayers, lit candles, felt the peace of the starry night.. All the world was at rest as we listened to the recorded meditative instrumental of the *Peace Song*.

Each morning there was a choice of personal practices—Yoga, Liturgy of the hours, Dream work, Meditation.

After a congenial and great tasting breakfast, session #2 challenged us to identify and discuss differences among groups of people. We made lists of those phrases used to express cultural biases and prejudice. We experienced a wonderful mixer — we created a name tag with our preferred answer to questions in the corners and circulated to compare how we are the same and how we are different. Rev. Jane Ayers led us through this session and was as ever, straight forward, warm and full of joy.

A session on *Entering the Mystery*, led by Anne Leibig, dealt with death and dying and end of life issues. In pairs, we shared our experience with death of family members and then, began to look at our own mortality.

Other experiences included small groups for personal sharing and a session on *Living Lightly on the Earth*.

The final send off was a beautiful soup lunch to strengthen each one for their travel home.

The entire retreat generated compassion, self knowledge and a bonding between members. A genuine gratitude and elation abounded for being called to come together to learn of the Elderspirit Community and for responding. The spirituality and mutuality which binds us, yet the space and place for our individual preferences is a valuable asset of the process. Thank you so very much to all the facilitators, the planning team, all who came and the retreat house staff. 🏠

## Announcing 2005 Retreat on Late Life Spirituality

The Planning Committee for the 2004 Retreat received excellent feedback from 32 of the 40+ participants on their evaluation forms. Many indicated a desire to do another retreat next year. In light of the fact that the residents of ElderSpirit Community in Abingdon will move and be getting settled in next Summer, the Committee is recommending that our 2005 retreat be one that Jubilee House Retreat Center is hosting in May. It is called *The Gift of God in Later Life* led by Jane Thibault, the author of *A Deepening Love Affair*. The retreat will take place May 20-21 and is an opportunity to reflect upon the challenge and call of later life. Jane is a long-time friend of ElderSpirit Community and has visited Abingdon and met several members. We highly recommend this retreat that costs \$75 for overnight and \$45 for commuters. Contact Jubilee House for further information: 822 East Main Street, Abingdon, VA 24210 OR email [info@jubileeretreat.com](mailto:info@jubileeretreat.com)

## More ElderSpirit Communities!

Our Abingdon Community now has two 1BR homes for sale and three 1 BR apartments to rent. We have a waiting list of six to purchase a 2 BR home. We are sure that similar communities will happen in other places and some are on the way. In the interest of connecting people of similar interests, we are printing the following articles.

## Catholic Retirement Housing - Florida

**Vision:** We are a group of older adults committed to spiritual growth within the Catholic faith tradition, caring for one another, respectful of the earth and dedicated to service to each other and to the larger community. We seek to explore the

development of a more intense, covenantal, and community lifestyle than that found in the traditional post-career retirement setting or in the typical parish.

**History:** In the early 1970's, a dozen or so young Catholics formed *Pilgrim Community* for the purpose of mutual support in living a deeply Christian lifestyle. Several of the members have remained in close contact and kept alive their vision of an intentional Catholic community. As these members now approach retirement, they desire to integrate their Catholic faith with their retirement plans.

**Residential Criteria:** The head of household must be 55+ years and meet criteria for independent living. Our vision is to develop a community of single-story villas (sale and rental) around a chapel and community building.

**Learn More About Us at:**

[www.catholicretirementhousing.com](http://www.catholicretirementhousing.com)

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Telephone: 727.776.5955

E-Mail: [community@catholicretirementhousing.com](mailto:community@catholicretirementhousing.com)

## Elders in the Smoky Mountains Family-of-Choice

We are in the process of creating a family-of-choice Sanctuary (similar to ElderSpirit). The 8 acres of land (debt free) lies in a lovely cove within a larger community of about 100 acres. Sites are available for three large group homes and one small home. We wish to find a healthy balance with privacy and community living. The community common land includes a large meadow, community building, swimming pool, about ½ acre for garden area, creek and woods. A lovely rustic “studio” with covered wrap-around deck is nearing completion. We are now starting on a smaller home and one group home.

Our vision is spiritual growth, living close to the Earth, mutual support and caring for each other and everything else ElderSpirit stands for. Our concept of group home living includes a private large bedroom/office/sitting room and private bath, and sharing of a large group kitchen and other living facilities.

**Call Anthony Beckett at 828-508-6243 or Ann Thompson at 828-497-7102. Or email [annariel@dnet.net](mailto:annariel@dnet.net)**



## Tell us if you want the Newsletter !!

We have been sending our newsletter to all the people whom we could think of who may be interested in the ElderSpirit Community, or who may have contacts who may be interested. Some have sent money for memberships and/or subscriptions, and we really appreciate this.

Now that most of our homes have been reserved for purchase or for rent, the time has come to revise our subscription list to include only those who wish to subscribe. The cost of a subscription will be \$20 a year, and we will promise at least three newsletters in the year 2005.

I will list the names of those who have paid for subscriptions during the year 2004. If your name is not here, please complete the form below if you wish to continue to receive the newsletter.

Margaret Beahan, Margaret Becker, Loretta Bergen, Ann Case, Charlie Chilton, Gerry Coe, Eloise Couch, Mary Cronin, Mara Culp, Claudette Downing, Eileen Grabiec, Walter Granger, Stephanie Hemelings, Peggy Hines, Virginia Lopeman, Mary Judith Nichols, George Patterson, Madeline Pearson, Cinnie Poppen, Caroline Rosell, Jud Simonson, Elizabeth Simonson, Frances Steen, Chris Stoddart, Ann Thompson, Evelyn Unger, Elizabeth Wolfe, Bob Wolfinger, Shirlee Zaremba.

NAME \_\_\_\_\_ PHONE \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_ EMAIL \_\_\_\_\_

CITY, STATE, ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

Please send with check for \$20.00 to: **ElderSpirit Community, PO Box 665, Abingdon, VA 24212**

I have added a donation of \_\_\_\_\_ to help complete the Common House and Meditation Center.

## Remembering John Heffernan

John Heffernan was president of the Board of Trailview Development Corporation, the organization that was set up to build the ElderSpirit Community in Abingdon. He served tirelessly, seldom missing a meeting, and responding to every call to answer questions, to relate to bankers or town officials, to help with technical problems or applications for funding. Since he was retired as a city planner for Bristol, Virginia, his knowledge and experience were vital for our young organization.

John was also an avid kayaker. On October 23 he was kayaking with friends Southwest Virginia's Russell Fork at Breaks Interstate Park, Dickenson County. He suffered a fatal injury while navigating a difficult stretch of the river. He had run this river countless times before as he developed his love for the sport over the past 15 years.

We will miss John's services, and even more we miss his friendship and support. We are grateful to have had his help during these years of forming ElderSpirit Community. 

## Reflection Group Scheduled in Abingdon

ElderSpirit Community is hosting a six session Face to Face Reflection Group in Abingdon in 2005. These meetings are a place and time to "share and understand ourselves and one another and how we are experiencing Spirit in our lives."

Elizabeth Mathews has agreed to work with Anne Leibig as a facilitator. Anne led two sets of sessions last year, and with the group developed the process outline.

The sessions will be Thursdays from 3:00 to 4:00, beginning on Thursday, January 13, and held every other week until March 24. The meetings will be at Jubilee House, Abingdon. If schools are closed because of weather the meeting will be cancelled. 

**Note: This newsletter and future newsletters may be read on our web site [www.elderspirit.net](http://www.elderspirit.net)**



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