



# HOLISTIC RETREATS

In our increasingly stressful society, a growing number of persons want to learn how to come to a deeper awareness of the interconnectedness of their body, mind, and spirit. In holistic spirituality, a person reverences his or her whole self as an expression of and a way to God. Through Lourdes Wellness Center—which is a creative interpretation of the Community Health Education Department of Our Lady of Lourdes Medical Center, Camden, NJ—religious and laypersons from across the nation can experience holistic spirituality retreats. Last year the Wholistic Retreat Program sponsored eight weekend retreats, seven week-long retreats, and other services to teach participants how to incorporate the principles of human wholeness into their lives.

It is unique for a medical center to sponsor holistic spirituality retreats; however, Our Lady of Lourdes believes its mission is not only to treat patients in the hospital but also to help persons enhance their wellness and spirituality.

The Wholistic Retreat Program was launched 13 years ago when two of the authors—Sr. Helen Owens, OSF, and Sr. Marianne Hieb, RSM—held a full-day workshop on holistic health at a

## *A New Jersey Medical Center Responds to Community Needs*

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local community college. Workshop participants requested additional information on spirituality and told their families and friends about their experience.

As a result of positive feedback, a weekend retreat for 30 participants was held later that year in Sea Isle City, NJ. At the retreat participants learned how to incorporate scriptural prayer, centering meditation, relaxation, exercise, art, and good nutrition into their daily lives. That weekend generated even more requests for follow-up information, workshops, and additional retreats on holistic spirituality. In 1983 the first week-long retreat was held in Blackwood, NJ, drawing

**Summary** Through Lourdes Wellness Center, sponsored by Lourdes Medical Center, Camden, NJ, religious and laypersons from across the nation can experience holistic spirituality retreats. In holistic spirituality, a person reverences his or her whole self as an expression of and a way to God.

Retreats offered through the Wholistic Retreat Program are geared to demonstrate the Christian and Franciscan perspective of the holiness of all creation. Some retreatants say the liturgies are the core of the holistic spirituality retreats, rich in their use of symbol, music, and word.

Meals served at the retreats are a celebration of color, texture, and fragrance. Movement and exercise options are always available. Staff from Our Lady of Lourdes Medical Center often come to test retreatants' cholesterol levels, assess their lifestyles and health, and provide information on health, fitness, and additional health screenings.

Lourdes wellness retreats have a bright future as people increasingly turn to spirituality, preventive care, and alternative ways of healing in our high-stress society.



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retreatants from as far away as Ontario, Tampa, and St. Louis.

Retreats are publicized in religious and secular publications, as well as in the Lourdes Wellness Center brochure. Also, many retreatants report that they have heard about Lourdes Wellness Center retreats from those who have attended them.

Sr. Owens and Sr. Hieb make up the core retreat team. Various other staff members join them at different sites. The average cost of a weekend retreat is \$100; the cost of a five- to seven-day retreat varies from \$225 to \$310, depending on the site.

#### ELEMENTS OF THE RETREATS

All elements of the retreats are geared to demonstrate the Christian and Franciscan perspective of the holiness of all creation.

**Prayer and Liturgy** Some retreatants say the liturgies are the core of the holistic spirituality retreats, rich in their use of symbol, music, and word. Morning and evening prayers incorporate silence, the Scriptures of the day, the Psalms, and time for reflection.

**Meals** At Our Lady of Lourdes retreats, meals are a celebration of color, texture, and fragrance. The foods used are fresh and healthful. Soothing music plays in the background. And through the experience of the meals and sessions offered by nutritionists from the medical center staff, retreatants learn how to make their diets more healthful when they return home.

**Exercise** Movement and exercise options are always available. As a result of various staff members' expertise, instruction is offered in yoga, aerobic dance, water exercises, gentle stretching, meditative movement, and t'ai chi, an oriental discipline.

The Human Wholeness Retreats are held at retreat houses that provide areas where retreatants can walk, often along a wooded path or beach. A swimming pool or gym may also be available. Retreatants may participate in physical activity if they wish; however, picturesque, quiet places to sit are always in abundance.

**Health Screenings** Staff from Our Lady of Lourdes Medical Center often come to retreats to test retreatants' cholesterol levels, assess their lifestyles and health, and provide information on health, fitness, and additional health screenings. Massage therapists, schooled in a range of touch therapies, talk with the group and are available for

individual massage sessions.

**Presentations** Retreatants may attend presentations during the retreat if they wish. These include information on holistic health; nutrition; stress management; and the physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual principles and practical application of a healthy life-style. The presentations are short, and they are always interactive. Those which call for more active participation include art journaling with color and clay to focus prayer.

**Community** Although Our Lady of Lourdes retreats offer many opportunities for silent reflection, some retreatants form strong friendships with each other. They often keep in touch long after the retreat.

#### RETREATS' SUCCESS

Participants at retreats fill out evaluations, which generally reveal their appreciation of the experience. But a more important indicator of success is how much the program has grown over the years. In 1979, 57 persons attended retreats; today the spirituality mailing list has more than 1,300 persons, all of whom have attended retreats.

Another sign of the retreats' success is that many persons who have attended return, volunteering to support the Wholistic Retreat Program by sharing their expertise, time, and energy. Some give presentations; some cook; others peel vegetables.

In addition, a number of persons have reported that they have made healthful changes in their

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Many retreat participants return, volunteering to share their expertise, time, and energy.

## ESTABLISHING A WELLNESS CENTER

Healthcare facilities planning wellness centers that emphasize spirituality should always start small. A number of centers have failed because their plans were too ambitious.

The experience of Lourdes Wellness Center, Camden, NJ, is one of organic growth. It began small, creating experiences of holistic spirituality and listening to participants' hopes. Lourdes Wellness Center leaders explored Franciscan values and the scriptural basis for wellness, as well as contemplative traditions. The program grew; one experience fostered the next.

Those wishing to accept such an undertaking should probe the charisma of their institution and seek to respond to the needs of their community. By taking this approach, the program has the best opportunity to grow and to succeed.



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lives. Many say they are improving their physical health by exercising, losing weight, coping with stress in more positive ways, and integrating prayer into their lives.

Finally, the recent offshoot from participants of the holistic spirituality retreats is Lourdes Associate Ministry Process (LAMP). LAMP members are persons who have participated in retreats and are now sharing their experiences with others. For example, LAMP members have given presentations on a variety of holistic topics to Mercy Corps (a group of volunteers who work with the Sisters of Mercy), to a bereavement group, and to several other groups.

### LIFE AS GIFT

Lourdes wellness retreats have a bright future. More and more people are turning to spirituality, preventive care, and alternative ways of healing in our high-stress and environmentally threatened society.

In addition, the medical center's constituents appreciate that it seeks creative ways to take its mission seriously.

Lourdes, through its holistic retreat program, can provide a caring experience for an individual, enabling him or her to achieve wellness. It can cooperate in forming communities that attend to the whole person—body, mind, and spirit—and that care for the environment. It can influence the Christian theology of wellness, of living life to the fullest, no matter what limitations the individual faces.

The Scriptures say, "I have come so that you may have life, and have it in abundance." The holistic retreats at Lourdes Wellness Center help people to know and name life as gift and to commit to living it more fully for themselves and, ultimately, for their society and their world. □

## ANTITRUST

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petition. On the one hand, this allows broad freedom for developing efficient IDN structures, even without any antitrust exemptions. On the other hand, no specific legal structure offers more or less antitrust protection under current rules.

An IDN could raise all the classic antitrust concerns such as horizontal arrangements between like providers, vertical arrangements between different types of providers, and even per se violations that fix prices. Antitrust enforcers' interest in these arrangements will vary according to their effect on competition. Coordination of services among providers who do not compete because of differences in service area or product will raise less concern than plans involving the same kinds of providers or price fixing.

If an IDN can remain focused on the patient and efficiently deliver services to the community, as is proposed, this would minimize antitrust concern. Unfortunately, some features integral to IDNs (especially pricing and arrangements among like providers) could raise serious antitrust problems.

Another antitrust challenge common in healthcare is the private use of antitrust laws to fight a hospital's denial of physician's privileges, bid to provide medical services, or medical staff membership based on the quality of his or her medical care. Providers who are shut out of IDNs for similar reasons could sue the IDN, alleging antitrust violations. And some healthcare providers, motivated by politics or self-interest, doubtless will harm the consumer and merit antitrust enforcement.

Any attempts to establish IDNs will need to also ensure clear language exists regarding the reach of antitrust laws. Healthcare providers will need support to act without being tied up by those who oppose change or believe they have lost some economic benefits. No one needs a valid reason to sue, but clear, coordinated government healthcare and antitrust policies will help ensure a successful defense and timely IDN development. □

## POSITIVE CHANGE

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retaining qualified medical and allied health professionals.

If managed care is at the heart of reform, we will become part of a network or a continuum of care. Our external relationships will require considerable interaction, dialogue, and mutual accountability. We shall have less autonomy and more interdependent relations. This will challenge us to determine what specific roles we want to play in the network, and it will raise delicate ethical questions about cooperation with other organizations. Boards of directors of Catholic healthcare organizations will be driven to review mission and constantly evaluate participation in a pluralistic network.

As we cope with external realities, we must also attend to internal concerns. Sponsorship of Catholic healthcare providers will change in the next two decades. We shall have to identify and recruit lay leaders to exercise governance of our institutions, and we will have to establish stronger ties with local Churches. The maintenance of Catholic identity and integrity will be more difficult in a reformed delivery system, but we have educated and capable lay leaders to sustain our distinctive presence. Religious sponsors, along with CHA, are already developing educational institutes to focus on training our lay leaders. In urban areas we shall have to give greater attention to identifying, recruiting, and training minority lay leaders.

### WE CAN MEET OUR CHALLENGES

These are exciting times, providing real opportunity to bring about positive changes in healthcare. I believe we have the history, the experience, and the will to preserve a Catholic presence in the provision of healthcare. CHA has positioned itself strategically to be an active and influential player in the reformed system. The challenges may be more complex but are not more daring than the efforts made by the pioneers of Catholic healthcare. □