

Take 10



July 2008

Boomers Don't Like to Share

By Linda McGinn, Director of Conference Services

Do you have a construction project on the horizon at your center? Read Linda McGinn's first-hand experience about what challenges may await you among the construction dust...

Boomers don't like to share! Well, at least they don't like sharing bathrooms and when Dr. Thomas Little, Executive Director of Bon Secours Spiritual Center, was asked by the Sisters of Bon Secours what was needed to take the Center into the future and keep it viable, this was the suggestion most often heard from guests and staff alike. Through the generosity of the Sisters of Bon Secours, the planning began on this multi-million dollar project in the fall of 2006. All 70 lodging rooms and shared restrooms would be demolished and 70 new rooms, each with a private bathroom, would rise from the rubble.

The foremost challenge to be faced was to contact all the groups booked for overnight events in 2007 and advise them that lodging rooms would not be available, but they could still bring their group to the Center for a day event. As you can imagine, this news wasn't met with great enthusiasm, but most group leaders were understanding and had faced this dilemma once or twice in the past at other facilities. Our "regulars", while dismayed, also knew that this renovation project would be to their benefit in the future. This was especially true of corporate groups whose attendance would rise with the promise of a private bathroom for their registrants.

So the construction began and so did the noise, dust and interruptions to heating, cooling, water and power and sanity! Many times the drilling noise made us feel we were in the dentist's office and we often wondered if the floor would open beneath us and suck us down to

the lower level. Meeting room juggling and lots of "splaining" abounded as we prepared group leaders for the changes and possible noise interruptions. Arrangements were made to sell or donate the existing bedroom furniture (a feat in itself!) and soon there was nothing left on the lodging wings except the outside walls and windows – imagine a huge roller skating rink.

The construction committee, consisting of representatives of the Sisters of Bon Secours, the Center's Executive Director and other staff members of the Bon Secours Spiritual Center and Whiting Turner Contracting spent hours, days and weeks gathered around a table overflowing with samples in order to choose colors, fabrics, and styles for the walls, bathroom fixtures, carpeting, bathroom flooring and tile, mattresses, curtains, bedspreads, pillows, sheets, lamps, ceiling fans, built-in storage, mirrors, and any other items that would be needed for the new bedrooms and bathrooms (whew!).

Construction meetings were held bi-weekly and bulletins were issued to keep staff apprised of the anticipated noise or other construction issues. The Conference Services and Operations staff assured group leaders that any changes or noise would cause their groups the



least amount of inconvenience as possible. Thankfully, construction did not take place on the weekends, affording church groups (that comprise most of the weekend guests) the peaceful environment they come to expect at Bon Secours.



Fast forward to January, 2008; everyone survived (staff and guests alike) with large doses of patience and understanding. The new lodging rooms are completed and beautiful and guests are thrilled with the accommodations. Those who most appreciate the new rooms are our previous guests, who are truly amazed by the transformation. The new rooms not only feature a private bathroom, but all have a full sized bed, ceiling fan, desk, chair, built in storage, a reading chair and lamp and key card access. Six ADA compliant rooms (two on each lodging wing) were part of the improvements allowing the Center to host guests with physical challenges.

In order to foster a sense of community, three Hospitality Rooms have been created in the Center (one on each level) giving our guests a place to meet and chat over a cup of coffee, continental breakfast and afternoon refreshments. These rooms have become quite a draw and it's especially wonderful to hear the sounds of conversation and laughter emanating from the rooms as our guests make themselves at home.

As with any improvement project, one leads to another and our newest undertaking is renovation of our Chapel which includes refinishing the pews, installing new flooring and a font as well as creating a larger vestibule area. With its new HVAC system, the renovation

completes the "loop" of the renewed heating and cooling system for the entire provincial house, meeting and lodging rooms. Our cherished pipe organ is now on vacation at the Jersey shore for maintenance and will return in the fall to beautiful new surroundings. The

Chapel renovation also serves a critical functional improvement for the Sisters Provincial House that is the home of Bon Secours Spiritual Center.

What's next? The warmer weather brings the chance to revitalize our outdoor space (313 acres adjacent to a state park) to include winding trails throughout the property with quiet meditative spaces being created along the paths, as well as possible outdoor structures.

Will construction projects ever come to an end? Of course not; we'll be busy making plans to further enhance the building and grounds; it's been an

exciting journey over the last few years watching the Center transform and rejuvenate. Through all the changes though, Bon Secours continues to be sacred ground and our guests depart the Center feeling refreshed and recharged and ready to face the real world renewed.



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