



## NOW WE SEE IT !!!

It was July, 1999, when Dene Peterson accepted the responsibility of constructing a retirement community on a 3.7 acre site in Abingdon, Virginia. At the same time, Jean Marie Luce undertook to gather a group of older adults who wish to live in community and commit themselves to spiritual growth, caring for one another, respect for the earth and service to the larger community.

With great pleasure we now look upon the speedy progress of the construction of ElderSpirit Community. Completion is expected in July, 2005, and the residents will be moving in this summer. Twelve of the 13 homes for sale are presently reserved, and 14 homes have been rented, leaving two rentals available and one home for purchase.

The 35 members now signed up to move into the community are from eight states and the

country of Andorra. Of the 21 now living in Virginia, seven have moved to Abingdon from five different states during the last several years. These people came to Abingdon to participate in the forming of ElderSpirit Community. 🏠

### Dates to Note:

- May 20-21 – Retreat at Jubilee House in Abingdon  
“The Gift of God in Later Life” \***
- June 24-26 – Elder Cohousing “Getting Started”  
Workshop in Boulder, Colorado \*  
(No Workshop in Abingdon)**
- October 7, 2005 – Dedication of ElderSpirit  
Community**
- October 8 – Blessing of Homes, Common House  
and Spirit Center**

\* See newsletter articles

## Renters' Choice

By Elizabeth Mathews

While each buyer had many choices about the details of their new homes in ElderSpirit Community, the homes for rent will have the same floors, cabinets, etc., for all. Therefore the renters were required to come to an agreement about their choices. It was decided to invite all renters to a meeting to make these decisions, and volunteers set out to make some pre-selections from a wide range of choices.

After looking in Bristol in one of the big Box Stores we became discouraged about their offering in our price range. We consulted the building contractor who suggested we make selections from two local stores, and these were most satisfactory. We ended up with four choices in each category: floor tile, carpet, kitchen cupboard color, counter tops and bathroom cabinets and sink.

The meeting was held after the residents' meeting in March. Some who could not attend emailed or telephoned their preferences. The final decisions were made by consensus among the members present. Bonnie Ostdiek helped us come to a harmonious conclusion. 🏠

## Resources Available to Create Your Own ElderSpirit Community

We have had more than 30 inquiries from people who see the ElderSpirit model as an example of the community of elders that they envision in their own locality. We are therefore offering to provide coaching to people who desire this service.

When a few people interested in starting an ElderSpirit Community (ESC) contact us, here is how we can help. Coaching includes:

- (1) A presentation by two staff introducing the history, vision, goal and values of ESC
- (2) Listening to hosting group and their hopes
- (3) A coaching plan developed around the following topics:
  - Creating a vision together
  - Mutual support and late-life spirituality
  - Roles for boards, staff, partnerships, and local civic entities
  - Membership and resident recruitment
  - Creating community
  - Shared experience of multi-income cohousing development.

There is also the possibility of ongoing coaching during the planning and development process. A brochure is available giving further details. 🏠

## Elder Cohousing Conference

By Dene Peterson

Elder Cohousing's first "Getting Started" workshop in Boulder, Colorado was rated very successful by its 38 participants. This workshop was organized by Abraham Paiss and Associates and co-sponsored by ElderSpirit Community and Wonderland Hill Development Company.

Zev Paiss, Founder of Elder Cohousing with his wife Neshama Abraham Paiss, explained what to do first to develop a cohousing neighborhood, how to organize a core group and how to find a site. He explained the importance of forming a partnership with the resident group and the professional design and development team.

Neshama Paiss, a Public Relations professional, explained the importance of letting others know that you are starting something new. She offered to help groups design a plan for attracting new members and the process of integrating them smoothly into the community.

Anne Leibig and Dene Peterson spoke for ElderSpirit Community. Dene explained how ElderSpirit developed as a not-for-profit agency, and Anne discussed our model and tools for spiritual development and forming the Resident Association.

The workshop was so stimulating that the discussion, conversation and questions were carried over to lunch and leisure. As Ben Brown, a conference participant, wrote in USA Today, "the Baby Boomers won't wait" and they want options for living.

The next Elder Cohousing "Getting Started" workshop will be June 24-26 in Boulder, Colorado. Registration is beginning now. You can learn more by contacting Abraham Paiss and Associates at 303-413-8066, by email at [Info@ElderCohousing.org](mailto:Info@ElderCohousing.org) or on the web at [www.ElderCohousing.org](http://www.ElderCohousing.org). 🏠

*"In mutual support of one another in our later years, we need skills to care for the other and ourselves. Often, people can feel overwhelmed while caring for the other and forget themselves. Or, at times, when they do care for themselves, they may feel they are abandoning the other. Mutuality means the ability to do both."*

Anne Leibig, Gestalt Therapist

## Meeting and Social Time with Jane Thibault

Jane Thibault has agreed to meet with ElderSpirit Community members and guests for a potluck meal from 5 to 7:30 p.m. on Saturday, May 21. The retreat closes at three on that day. The gathering will be at the Senior Center, 300 Senior Drive, Abingdon.

Anyone who wishes to meet with Jane and the ElderSpirit Community members is welcome. If you need directions or transportation to the Senior Center, call Dene's home (276-628-5149 – leave a message) or speak to an ElderSpirit member who is making the retreat. 🏠

## Spirited Internship Lands New Learnings

By Jane Ayers

Was it on the wings of Spirit that I came to this community for my graduate studies field placement requirement? As a Master of Social Work student from Radford University, I needed a spring placement and Elder-Spirit Community® (ESC) needed help with several projects suddenly popping up like crocus after a few mild days. I have received lots of learnings and am grateful Spirit landed me in your midst.

On the level of structure, observing ESC's organic process has been amazing. On one hand, meetings, guidelines, policies, procedures and practices have had their place in coalescing community. Spirit, on the other hand, seemed to favor acts of graciousness, listening, caring, pardon and forgiveness while pulsating ESC with wonderful vitality.

Participating in the process for creating future ElderSpirit Communities in different settings has been equally amazing. Being in on decisions to utilize the coaching method for planting new communities and compiling a resource notebook have helped me see how a vision becomes incarnate.

I have a vision for the community in which I live to help young people stay alive, stay well and stay drug free. How appropriate that ESC has mentored me through this internship to move towards incarnating my passion for Damascus teens and their families. When I receive my MSW next spring, I'll be soaring on the wings of Spirit helping my community come together with renewed vitality.

Thank you, ElderSpirit Community, for a great field placement! 🏠

## Retreat, May 20-21, 2005 The Gift of God in Later Life

In each of the past two years, a team from ElderSpirit Community has conducted a retreat for members and others who are interested. Since 2005 is the "moving in" time we are not conducting a retreat, but we are promoting the retreat with the title above. This retreat will be held at Jubilee House Retreat Center, 822 E. Main Street, Abingdon, VA 24210-4415. 276-619-0919. [info@jubileeretreat.com](mailto:info@jubileeretreat.com). To reserve a place contact the retreat center.

The presenter of this retreat is Jane Marie Thibault, MA, MSSW, Ph.D. Dr. Thibault's primary research is in the area of vocation and spiritual growth in later life. She is the author of several books [A Deepening Love Affair: The Gift of God in Later Life](#), [10 Gospel Promises for Later Life](#) and [Understanding Religious and Spiritual Aspects of Human Service Practice](#). 🏠

*"Those who are privileged to be experiencing late life have the challenge and opportunity to embark on a new vocation."*  
Jane Thibault

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\_\_\_\_ Please send information about ElderSpirit Community to my email address:

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I am sending a donation to help complete the Spirit Center and equip the common kitchen

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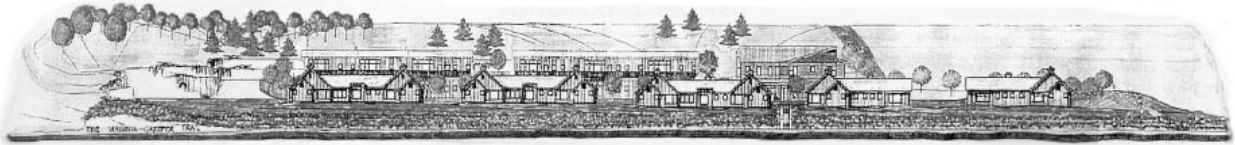
## Book Review, by Mary Grindstaff

*Sparks of the Divine*, by Drew Leder (Sorin Books: Notre Dame, IN 2004), is subtitled “Finding Inspiration in our Everyday World.” That is precisely what this little book does. It consists of 251 pages, one hundred essays which are meditations on the world we inhabit and are submerged in unconsciously, much as fish are submerged in water. The book serves as a spiritual guide to seeing sparks of the divine in everything from the most mundane to the most sublime.

Each meditation takes us deep into the heart and soul of each object and/or activity in our lives, and most are followed by meditation exercises and activities to deepen and strengthen our “inner sight.” The book is rich with sixty-some poignant quotations from the world’s great wisdom teachers of all ages and beliefs.

I see this book as an excellent resource for reading and sharing in groups, valuable for a community such as ElderSpirit. I was richly blessed in reading it, and have had my senses sharpened in watching and waiting for sparks of the divine. I can truthfully say with Mechtild of Magdeburg, Medieval Mystic, whom Leder quotes on page 113, “The day of my spiritual awakening was the day I saw—and knew I saw—all things in God and God in all things.” I believe Leder’s book will do this for many readers.

Note: Drew Leder’s research and writings were very important in the early planning of ElderSpirit Community. Drew visited our group three times to conduct workshops on Later-Life Spirituality. To learn about his interests and services, go to his website, [www.evergreen.loyola.edu/~dleder](http://www.evergreen.loyola.edu/~dleder). 



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370 E. Main St. • P.O. Box 665  
Abingdon, Virginia 24212  
(276) 628-8908  
E-mail: [espirit@preferred.com](mailto:espirit@preferred.com)  
Website: [www.elderspirit.net](http://www.elderspirit.net)

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