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FEATURED

Rural Janesville retreat center changes owners

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Open house attendees stood near a sign for the Metta Meditation Center in rural Janesville. The property near Lake Elysian formerly was used as a retreat center operated by Catholic nuns with the Sisters of St. Francis of Rochester. Photo courtesy Peter K. Johnson



JANESVILLE — For more than two decades people in search of spiritual serenity gathered on wooded acreage on the east side of Lake Elysian. The property recently changed hands and although the sign for Holy Spirit Retreat Center has been replaced, anyone in search of peace of mind is welcome to use the facility.

“Metta Meditation Center will continue to be run as a retreat center,” said Patti Ruskey of Mankato.

Ruskey is a former board member for the new owner, Triple Gem of the North, a nonprofit with a focus on mindfulness.

Triple Gem already had established a presence in both Mankato and St. Peter. The lakeside retreat site allows the nonprofit to expand its offerings.



Ceremonies marked the official opening Saturday of the Metta Meditation Center. The inaugural day's activities included guided meditations, teachings from Buddhist traditions and chanting. Photo courtesy Peter K. Johnson

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"Mindfulness is not a religion, it is a technique," Ruskey said. "It can be useful to anyone from any walk of life."

Sisters who operated Holy Spirit designed their retreat center to also serve as a conservancy project. It was important to them that the group taking over the 37 acres should continue efforts to preserve the environment.

"They did not want the land to be divided up (into lakefront lots)," Ruskey said, referring to the former owners. "The retired nuns from St. Francis of Rochester have been very supportive (of Triple Gem)."

Some of the sisters were among the guests at the open house Saturday at the newly named Metta Meditation Center.



More than 30 Buddhist monks from throughout the United States and several other countries attended inauguration events Saturday at Metta Meditation Center in rural Janesville. Photos courtesy Peter K. Johnson

“We had friends here from all over the world, including monks from Sri Lanka, the UK, Cambodia, Laos and India,” said Bhante Sathi of Mankato, who oversees many events at the center.

A native of Sri Lanka, Sathi practices Buddhism. His faith has elements useful to any human being and there is no requirement for visitors to be Buddhists, he said.

“Metta” was chosen as the center's name because the word means “friendliness,” Sathi said. “Any religious, spiritual community is welcome to use the center.

“Basically, we want to focus on the locals. As in the past, people may come by themselves, with their families or in twos, as a couple,” he said.

Groups of people have begun reserving the center for gatherings. Not all its scheduled activities involve overnight stays.

“Recently, we have started mindfulness discussions and we are offering meditation classes,” Sathi said.

More Information

What: Metta Mediation Center, on 37 acres along Lake Elysian, is used as retreat center and for learning about meditation and mindfulness.

Where: 3864 420th Ave., Janesville, site of former Holy Spirit Retreat Center.

Cost: Donations suggested to cover cost of facility use.

Contact information: Call (507) 234-5712 or send an email to: metta@TripleGem.org. For reservations: retreats@TripleGem.org.

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