

Bon Secours Spiritual Center offers calming effect

Some groups that visit the Bon Secours Spiritual Center (BSSC), Marriottsville, request the “Rocking Chair Room.”

“The view out the window is my absolute favorite place on the property,” said Barbara Castellano, marketing and public relations project coordinator, as she watched the group of ducks paddling atop of the pond with golden koi fish swimming beneath.

A lovely Japanese garden surrounded small island waterfalls; a park bench sat empty under an orange-leafed tree. The resident turtles hid during the rainy autumn morning, perhaps under the red footbridge.

With 25 cushioned traditional wooden rockers set in a cozy circle, the rocking chair room is one of a handful of settings offered to groups for retreats or conferences.

A ministry of the Sisters of Bon Secours (the U.S. provincial offices are housed within), the spiritual center welcomes everyone in the spirit of hospitality – individually or in a group. It serves the spiritual, personal and professional development of individuals and organizations from various faith traditions.

Approaching the end of a year-long major renovation which began January 2007, the 70-room third floor now resembles a “small boutique hotel,” Mrs. Castellano said. Previously guests shared public bathrooms before the floor was gutted and transformed.

Groups that use the facility include corporations, parishes, government organizations, nonprofit agencies and the Archdiocese of Baltimore. Some use it as a training center, some for retreats.

“People who come here are looking for ways to deepen their spiritual life,” said Mrs. Castellano, “take some time apart to focus on their relationship with God.”

Some people come as individuals, at times in search of silence.

Other visitors show up for the afternoon “just to walk the grounds. The feeling of God’s presence is here. It has a calming effect,” she said.

Bon Secours will mark its 40-year anniversary in 2008 with the grand opening of the new guest accommodations and special events throughout the year. Bishop W. Francis Malooly will bless the rooms Jan. 13, 2008, during the opening celebration, which includes Mass, reception, open house and tours.

Visit www.bonsecoursspiritualcenter.org. (Note BSSC does not book weddings, wedding receptions, political gatherings, graduation parties or picnics.)