

# STREET SCENE

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Is there life after a traditional New Year's?

A non-traditional celebration may be what you need to put the pizzazz back into ringing in the New Year. See Page 8D.

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DAN DEAN/staff photographer

The grounds of the Mansera Retreat House in Bloomfield Hills offers Brian Henry an idyllic setting in which to discover nature and put himself in touch with himself. An attorney and family man, Henry has discovered peace and contentment through a yearly retreat.

## Taking time to clear the cobwebs

By Carol Azizien  
staff writer

Brian Henry — yuppie, successful attorney, family man, social climber — becomes a hermit one weekend a year.

He doesn't don sack cloth or douse himself with ashes or beat his chest 50 times to repent for past sins.

But Henry, 31, of Bloomfield Township does turn off all the noise in his life and tunes into his spiritual world at the Mansera Retreat House in Bloomfield Hills.

The other 362 days of the year, my mind is cluttered with deadlines and demands from work and family," he said. "I don't have time for myself."

"The retreats have taught me to set my priorities straight."

Henry is among a growing number of young people who escape to wooded sanctuaries and shut out worldly influences such as football games, rock music, corporate commands, psychobabble and sitcoms.

LAST YEAR, 700,000 to a million Americans visited 580 retreat cen-

ters in the United States and Canada, according to the Rev. Thomas Gedeon, director of Retreats International, a national agency for the facilities.

There are no figures on the number of young people who participate in retreats. But area directors say there's a renewed interest in spirituality among the under-35 set.

"This generation wants enjoyment without commitment," said the Rev. Eugene P. Simon of the Mansera Retreat House in Bloomfield Hills. "They're egocentric, but they find out that doesn't bring them happiness."

"So, they return to more traditional values, set long-range goals and discover there's somebody who exists outside of themselves. Then, they begin to develop a personal relationship with God."

Although most Catholic centers are geared to adults, a few of them have initiated programs for youths. At Mansera, the sounds of silence are all you can hear in the hallowed halls. But, at St. Benedict's in Oxford, a facility designed for high

school and college students, you'd probably learn about values from rock music or teen movies.

"We've been doing this for 13 years, and we're booked solid on weekends," said the Rev. Daniel Homan, director of St. Benedict's.

He admits spirituality isn't "cool" among the under 30 crowd. But many who attend for the first time find the experience enlightening, he noted.

"I resent the anti-fun image. I think Jesus was a fun person, and he left us with guidelines that ensure our happiness."

"We stress (to participants) that God loves them personally and teach them to talk to him as they talk to a person."

HENRY admits he was a little leery of the religious stigma when he joined a group of Catholic lawyers and physicians at an October retreat seven years ago.

He signed up after realizing that the people he admired most were "able to handle a lot of different situations because they had a strong spiritual life."

"At first, I thought it would be very monastic, rigorous and boring — more of the meaningless stuff you get on Sundays at church," the Southfield attorney (he works for Simon Detch Tucker & Friedman) said.

"I found out this place wasn't full of monks with shaved heads running around chanting and beating themselves with Bibles."

After the retreats, Henry learned how to "talk to God honestly, look at my faults, make amends with people I've hurt, strengthen relationships with my family and handle conflict and tragedies better."

"I can cope with making mistakes," he added. "I don't have to wear sack cloth for a week to make amends. I realized that God loves me no matter what."

He also refreshes himself daily — by praying, jogging, doing yard work, playing baseball, visiting friends or seeing a movie.

There is one thing he misses on his annual retreats — football. "When I get out on Sunday, I can't wait to read the sports page," he said with a laugh.

Pick a place for a retreat

Need a spiritual tuneup? Try recharging your inner batteries at the following retreat centers:

**Columbiere Retreat and Conference Center**

Originally built as a training center for young Jesuits, Columbiere now looks more like a country club than an austere retreat house.

An outdoor swimming pool, tennis and basketball courts, gymnasium, athletic field, nature paths and trails for cross country skiing line 400 wooded acres in Clarkston.

Spiritual refreshment takes several forms here:

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DAN DEAN/staff photographer

The retreat house has a chapel where Brian Henry can pray and meditate away from the hustle and bustle of his life.

R.U. Syrius

Karlos Barney



"This cud's for you."



MICKY JONES

An American tourist heads back to the U.S. outfitted in festive Mexican garb.

## Common sense cures those air travel blues

By Iris Sandersen Jones  
special writer

Q. We were planning to go to Mexico in February. My husband is threatening to cancel because we've lost our bags twice and he is tired of the hassles of air travel. What can I do?

B.R.M.,  
Southfield

A. I was aboard Piedmont Flight 455 from Detroit to Charlotte, S.C., when I read your letter, with a commuter flight ahead of me from Charlotte to Asheville, N.C. I started thinking about the flight I was on and what could be change everything but there are some things you can do to cut down the hassles of travel.

Everything Piedmont had done so far had smoothed my way. It was a nice, clean plane with smiling employees and it left on time. But I had seen passengers doing everything possible to create problems for themselves. I guess lesson number one for hassle-free travel is that you can make trouble for yourself even if the airline doesn't make it for you.

Late check-in. Too much carry-on luggage. Youngsters already tired before they leave home. Uncomfortable clothes. Basic things, like the family ahead of me at the check-in counter: they had no name tags on their luggage.

Elementary, my dear Watson, as Sherlock Holmes would say, but you would be surprised at the number of bags I have seen checked in without tags. I put two sturdy tags on mine, in case one gets torn off, and I sometimes slap on an additional stick-on label with the name of my destination hotel.

You probably put your name on your bags, but do you put them inside, in a visible place, so the airline can figure out who you are if the bag is lost and the tags are gone? Most lost bags are promptly found; help the airline to deliver them promptly as well. You learned defensive driving, now learn defensive traveling.

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