

## It's never too early to plan the perfect retreat

Big or small, there are tips to help any size group meet their needs and fulfill their goals



With church and family budgets tight, folks planning retreats, reunions and other gatherings are looking for just the right place—close to home, affordable and memorable.

Metro Voice has put together our Fall Retreat Guide with tips on planning your gathering as well as the stories behind the retreat facilities we recommend.

Inside you'll find options from a few minutes to just a morning's drive away. All offer top-notch facilities and unbeaten hospitality to make your stay refreshing and renewing!

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A relaxing setting such as this one at Forest Park can do wonders for you and your outlook.

## ~ 2013 RETREAT GUIDE ~

### MORE THAN JUST A PLACE FOR CHURCH CAMPS

The Tall Oaks Conference Center is a year-round camp/retreat center owned by the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) of Greater K.C. It is located on 340 acres of mostly prairie forest 30 miles west of downtown Kansas City.

Over 300 groups use Tall Oaks each year ranging from mostly youth groups in the summer to adult usage during the majority of the rest of the year. We host seven Disciples camps during the summer. Other groups who make Tall Oaks home for a short period are:

- Seven special needs camps during the summer include: MDA (Muscular Dystrophy), ADA (Diabetes), 2 autism/Asperger camps, sickle cell anemia youth, foster kids and kids with grief issues.
- Craft Groups: Many adult groups for quilting, scrapbooking, photography, and creative painting workshops have found a home at Tall Oaks.
- Educational Groups: Many public school and college groups use Tall Oaks.
- Tall Oaks boasts two of the best educational and recreational programs in the area.
- One is the OAKS Program. It is an experiential



program challenge course which uses three different levels of activities to teach teamwork, bonding, problem solving and leadership. The first level is ground games which are activities that groups do out on a lawn or meeting room space. The second level has over 20 low ropes course elements

### How to plan and host a retreat

by Christine Kane | Event Planner

If you're passionate about the work you do, you've probably considered offering a getaway retreat so your clients can spend some intense high-focus time with you and other like-minded souls. Sounds amazing, doesn't it? It is!

My list has now grown so much that I no longer offer these more intimate retreats. Now, I meet many coaches, consultants, trainers and ministry leaders who want to host their own retreats.

If this sounds like you, here are some tips—straight from my personal "been-there-done-that" files—on how to plan and host your own retreats.

**1—Build a List of attendees**  
It's one thing to have a great idea for a retreat. But it's a whole other thing to find people to come!

The great news about retreats is that your list doesn't have to be huge in order to fill the spaces. Many retreat centers offer options for 10-person retreats.

Still, you need to have a list—whether it's your client database, or your eZine

list—in order to market your retreat.

**2—Name your Retreat**  
Give your retreat a name. This grounds your idea with a vision and purpose.

At first, I just called my retreat: "Women's Retreat." (Not particularly exciting, huh?)

When I finally created the name, "The Unstoppable Power of Intentional Retreat," I was much more excited at the prospect of my retreats—and many more women expressed interest!

**3—Decide How Many People You Want**  
My retreats had anywhere from 22—35 people in them. Many of my clients have offered retreats for as few as 6 people. The choice is yours. What is ideal for you?

**4—Choose a Time for Your Retreat**  
Retreats can range anywhere from one to nine days. Or longer! If you're just getting started, I recommend a three-day format. This makes it easy for your participants to plan, to arrange travel, and doesn't require too many days off from work. Of course, this is also dependent upon the content you want to deliver.

**5—Choose a Location**  
Where do you want to host your retreat?  
First, let's start with region. I recommend that, at first, you keep your retreat within easy driving distance.

It's great to have familiar surroundings and not have to travel far. If you want to consider a more exotic location, it will obviously take a lot more planning on your part.

Next, let's talk about choosing a retreat center.

There are many retreat centers that provide amazing options (see advertisers in this guide). Some facilities are more luxurious, some more simple—but they do allow for an affordable retreat experience for you as a host—and for your clients.

I recommend that you choose a space that offers lodging and meals. Something special happens to a group of people when they dine and sleep on site—without the distractions of the outer world.



Take time to shop around and explore your options, review your pricing and weigh the pros and cons of each location.

**6—Price your Retreat**  
Putting a price tag on your retreat can bring up lots of stuff.

But you must challenge yourself! NOT to play small. Low prices can position your retreat as low-value.

Also, do not price your retreat just above the per-person price you're paying the retreat center. You need to plan for

### FOREST PARK IS THE BEST OF TWO WORLDS



Though just a few blocks off I-70 and just five minutes from downtown Topeka, Forest Park Conference and Retreat Center, located on 45-acres in a wooded valley of a forest, features wildlife such as deer, foxes, geese and a variety of other animals. Spending time at Forest Park is a great and inexpensive way to unwind and relax in a secluded area. It's not unusual to see a family of deer stroll by. With such a rustic setting located in a thickly forested area, a person would not guess that they are so close to the city.

Even though it's so close to the city, Forest

Park may be one of Kansas' best kept secrets. But being so close to the highway and everything the city of Topeka has to offer, makes it an ideal place to kick back, relax and spend some time

with nature. And with its large meeting halls, a huge tabernacle shaped like a cross, and a commercial kitchen for use of guests, Forest Park meets the needs of a large variety of groups.

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Step Back in Time to an elegant Country Estate where the beauty and wonder of the Kansas Flint Hills blend with Twenty-First Century charm to provide a unique setting for your retreat, conference, or wedding. Great for families, faith-based groups & businesses who want to get away to a quiet, calm setting.

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- Crafts group

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12797 189TH ST. PO Box 116 Linwood, KS 66052

913-301-3004 administration@talloaks.org www.talloaks.org

**TAKE A WALK ON THE WILD SIDE**  
Take a walk on the wild side during a unique experience at Hedrick Exotic Animal Farm. Whether it's petting a zebra, riding a camel or feeding a giraffe, this one-of-a-kind attraction offers the opportunity to come face-to-face with several unusual animals, including kangaroos. It's an animal adventure not to be forgotten and one that is truly unlike any other in the Midwest!

Come and stay in one of our many beautifully decorated suites, each with a hand-painted mural depicting special animals here on the farm. Each suite is complete

with television and private bath. Stepping from your door to the wrap-around balcony is a relaxing way to enjoy the amazing view of the animals and the peace of a quiet Kansas evening. Special guest tours provide an intimate and unforgettable experience with more than 30 varieties of exotic animals.

so they try to superficially make the retreat seem more exciting. Don't do this.

**Bonus Tip #2: Allow space**  
Many years ago, I went to a personal growth retreat that literally exhausted me. The hosts were obviously so frightened of not giving enough content that they dragged the participants around from one activity to the next.

The best thing about this retreat? It taught me what NOT to do when I was hosting my own retreats!

My retreats had lots of space built into them. Yes, it can be scary to allow space because it feels like you're not working! But the gift of holding space for your participants IS working. And it provides a great value. Be strong enough to allow for this.

### STEP BACK IN TIME

The nearly "century old" charming Country Estate, where the beauty and wonder of the Kansas Flint Hills blend with Twenty-First Century charm, provides a unique setting for your special gathering. Keene Road Country Estate and Conference Center is a 17-room Colonial Estate charmingly decorated throughout—a place for Clubs, Organizations, Educational Groups, Associations, and Corporations to retreat from the chaos of daily life and indulge in a quiet, calm setting to focus on the important business of

hand. The Country Estate appeals also as a traditional, classic setting for weddings and important family gatherings.

Facilities available for enjoyment: A 17-room

Please see KEENE page 19

### TIME TO TAKE A BREATH

Lake Doniphan Conference & Retreat Center is situated on 300 wooded, rolling acres surrounding scenic Lake Doniphan, just outside of Excelsior Springs, MO. Primarily hosting retreats for Christian church groups, it also welcomes corporate entities looking for more

affordable off-site business conferences or retreats.

"I've had guests exclaim over the amount of work they can accomplish in planning sessions away from normal office distractions," says Brenda O'Dell, Lake Doniphan's Business and

Please see DONIPHAN page 19

### forest park CONFERENCE & RETREAT CENTER

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### BREATHTAKING VIEWS

Sky Ranch Cave Springs is located in the breathtaking surroundings of Northeastern Oklahoma, in the 4-state area. This 1480 acre, non-denominational facility holds all the adventure of camping, as well as all of the comforts of home. Sky Ranch understands that purposeful and intentional planning is vital to providing an experience that is peaceful, meaningful, and beneficial to all guests. With years of retreat experience to draw from, the staff at Sky Ranch Cave Springs recognizes that a successful retreat begins the moment a potential guest makes an inquiry. With unparalleled attention to every detail, the heart of Sky Ranch is to provide excellent service, outstanding facilities and unique opportunities for group members and leaders to connect, grow, and benefit from their time together.

Sky Ranch has the capacity to host groups of various sizes, from small family reunions to larger corporate or church retreats. A couple of different lodging options provide modern, comfortable sleeping accommodations for up to 400 guests. A variety of meeting spaces provides seating and gathering opportunities, complete with stages, a full AV inventory, and indoor/outdoor options. A brand new outdoor amphitheater provides a beautiful backdrop for an intimate time of worship for youth or church retreat groups, or a fun twist on movie night!

While lodging and meeting spaces are crucial to retreat success, Sky Ranch knows that feeding group members

Please see SKY page 19

### YMCA CAMP HAMMOND

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## SKY RANCH CAVE SPRINGS

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### RETREAT GUIDE CONTINUED

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#### TALL OAKS

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that are done on low apparatus and do not take special safety equipment. Then the high ropes course has 8 elements that are up in the trees and use harness, belaying ropes, helmets and concludes with a zip line ride.

The Tall Oaks Equestrian program is an educational experience with horses. These activities range from pony rides for the youngest riders, to arena training events of several levels, to trail rides on our beautiful woodland trails.

Tall Oaks has many outdoor areas for communing with nature and God and it is considered "Holy Ground" for many who come here whether using the site for a religious retreat or other type of event.

Tall Oaks has an excellent food service that can meet the needs of about any type of group request as well as special menu needs. Holiday banquets are the specialty in November and December.

### DONIPHAN

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Colonial Estate including 3 bathrooms, 4 changing rooms, a modern catering kitchen, dining and meeting rooms on three floors - Indoor seating & tables for up to 200 guests, with space for more if needed - Refrigerated storage for flowers - Gazebo for wedding ceremonies - Large outdoor grill - Fire pit - Large patio for dancing or seating - Outdoor lighting - Wishing well - Pond - Nature trail and more!

Located just one mile from Interstate 70, this property, with its wildlife, wildflowers and pure country living, is also available as a wedding venue, or can be used by faith-based groups, corporations or families as a retreat or conference site. It can be booked for day or evening activities for small or large groups, as well as for an overnight accommodation for small groups. Just take a few minutes to sit and watch the sunset over the Flint Hills, or listen to the sounds of the songbirds in the day, or the crickets, coyotes, and other country critters in the evening, and you will discover the beauty that exists hidden in this part of Kansas.

### RETREAT LOCATIONS

**FOREST PARK CONFERENCE & RETREAT CENTER**  
3158 SE 30th St.  
Topeka, KS 66607  
785-234-8024  
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www.forestparkretreat.com

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www.lakedoniphan.com

**KEENE RD. COUNTRY ESTATE & CONFERENCE CENTER**  
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**YMCA - CAMP HAMMOND**  
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Kathy, 354-8591  
www.ymca-topeka.org/facilities

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Doug McClain, 918-542-1547  
cavesprings@skyranch.org  
www.skyranchcavesprings.org

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