

# Shalom House News

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## Dear Shalom House Friends,



My name is Mary Alexander and I was blessed to become director of Shalom House on August 24, 2009. In this letter I'd like to tell you a little

about myself and how I came to Shalom House.

I am originally from the Milwaukee, Wisconsin area. After graduating from college, I taught in the Milwaukee Archdiocese for eight years. I completed my graduate studies at Marquette University and worked a short time doing research for the Medical College of Wisconsin.

It was then that I began to pay attention to how God was working in my life. I found that I had a great desire to work in service to the poor.

I volunteered for a year with the Glenmary Sisters in Kentucky. They taught me about the ministries of hospitality and presence.

When my year with the sisters was complete, I found that my heart was rooted in Eastern Kentucky.

I spent the next 14 years as director of Christian Social Services in Morehead, Kentucky, working with individuals and families in crisis. I can't begin to express the blessings I received in those years—from being involved in ministry in my small church of 12 families, to visiting families throughout the region, to seeing adults move from financial crisis to home ownership.

During my last three years in Morehead, I completed the Lay Ministry Formation Program through the Catholic Diocese of Lexington. Those were wonderful years of spiritual and personal growth and at the end of the program, I felt called to do retreat ministry.

In 2004 I was blessed to meet and marry Don Alexander. I moved to Virginia and became step-mother to four wonderful young women — Amy, Jenn, Rachael and Karen. This past year Don and I became grandparents to Elizabeth Grace and Briton Alexander.

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### Special points of interest:

The Richmond Diocese appoints a new director to Shalom House

A new advisory council is being developed

People are saying great things about their experiences at Shalom House

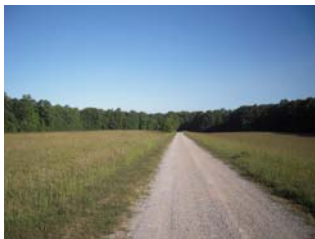
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## Advisory Council Development

Shalom House is in the process of developing an advisory council. The purpose of this council will be to work with the director and the Diocese of Richmond to develop new programs and retreat experiences for guests, to oversee the finances and mission of Shalom House, and to develop and approve policies and procedures for Shalom House. Responsibilities for council members will include serving for a three-year term, at-

tending quarterly meetings, and serving as a liaison between Shalom House and the greater Richmond community. Prior board or advisory council experience is welcomed, but not necessary. We are looking for people to represent a broad spectrum of the community. If you are interested in serving on the Shalom House Advisory Council or have questions, please contact Mary Alexander, Director at 804-883-6149.



"As guests drive up the beautiful road to Shalom House, I hope they begin to feel the restfulness they are going to experience."

## Resting in God's Arms

Someone once asked me, "How do you want someone to feel when they're on retreat at Shalom House?" I answered that I wasn't sure how they'd feel driving up to Shalom House the *first* time, but I said that the *second* time they drove up the beautiful drive to the farmhouse, I wanted them to begin to feel the restfulness they knew they were about to experience.

Being on retreat is a special time. It's a time away from the duties and anxieties of our busy lives. It's a time to give ourselves the gift of being "ministered to". It's a time

to allow ourselves to rest in the arms of God.

Some of the best sleep I've ever experienced has been on retreat. Some of the most intense times of reflection and prayer in my life have been during retreat. Some of the biggest decisions about the direction of my life have been made during retreat.

I invite you to Shalom House where I pray you, too, will rest in the arms of God.

**"Preach the gospel to all the world, and if necessary, use words."**  
St. Francis of Assisi

## Dear Shalom House Friends (continued from page 1)

Since arriving in Virginia, I have been teaching elementary school. In May I saw the notice that the Diocese was looking for a new director for Shalom House and I wondered if God was calling me to another ministry.

Waiting in God's time is not always easy, but when we look back we can see the wisdom gained in that period. I spent much of my summer in silence and prayer, wondering what God had in store for me when the "new year" began. In early August I received a call that the interview committee made the recommendation to Bishop DiLorenzo that I be appointed as director of Shalom House.

To say that I was excited about the news is such an understatement! I have received wonderful support from many at the Pastoral Center and Debbie Novroski, the administrator at Shalom House, has been a patient and thorough teacher to me. As I learn about the history and ministry of Shalom House, I am exploring ways to bring the Good News of Christ's message to all through the peace and hospitality of Shalom House.

Peace,

Mary Alexander, Director



We would love to have Adirondack chairs for each of the decks at Shalom House.

## Shalom House Wish List

Everyone has dreams and wishes. At Shalom House we have wishes that we think will make the retreat experience more pleasing and comfortable for our guests. If you find yourself able to make a gift to Shalom House here are some of our wishes and needs. Remember all gifts are tax deductible and may be made in honor or memory of a loved one:

- Adirondack chairs for the decks
- Ice machine
- Small microwaves for each of the lodges
- Large terra-cotta planters

- Volunteers to do interior painting and to do repair work on the walking paths.
- Carved welcome signs for each of the lodges
- LCD projector
- Scholarship funds for those financially unable to make a retreat
- Spiritual books and DVD's for our library
- Prayers and financial support for the ministry of Shalom House.

## What Guests are Saying about Shalom House

"I love the tranquility of Shalom House."

"The staff is so friendly and welcoming. They make you feel comfortable."

"I loved the food. The desserts were amazing."

"The grounds are beautiful."

"I was impressed with how clean the facility was."

"It's so peaceful and quiet here."

"Being at Shalom House is always a special time for me."

"It's bright, open and homey."

"I especially like the calm feeling the place emits."



"I liked sitting out at night and looking at the sky. Being this far away from the city you can see zillions of stars."

## Changes at Shalom House

We have been blessed to be able to make many improvements at Shalom House. The big news is that a new water treatment system was installed to take care of the iron staining and the sulphur odor in the water!

We have a beautiful new logo and brochure. You can find our website at: [www.shalomhouseretreatcenter.com](http://www.shalomhouseretreatcenter.com).



The gathering room in the farmhouse has a new look.

There is new furniture in the meeting areas of the lodges and in the gathering room in the farmhouse. The electrical system in the farmhouse was upgraded. New quilts and valances have brightened the guest rooms.



New quilts brighten the guest rooms.

There is new kitchen equipment and there are new recipes on the menu like:

- five-spice tilapia with ponzu sauce, salmon, or mahi mahi with rice pilaf and apple-spice trifle;
- four-cheese spinach lasagna, spaghetti and meatballs, stuffed shells, baked ziti, or penne shrimp with tossed salad, garlic bread and brownie sundaes;
- tarragon, parmesan or herb-stuffed chicken, mashed red potatoes, stir-fry vegetables and pumpkin bars;
- root vegetable stew, shrimp jambalaya, Indian-spiced chili, West African soup, tortellini-spinach soup, garden chowder or Brunswick stew with dinner rolls, cheese and fruit tray and apple cake;
- Barbeque pork sandwiches, boca burgers, or deli sandwiches, old settlers baked beans, cole slaw and cheesecake.

The menu continues to evolve with every group we host and we're even developing a Shalom House Cookbook!

The buildings were all power-washed and the decks and railings have been stained. The dock at the pond was repaired. Grading was done around the buildings and new drainage was completed to help move water away.

If you haven't been to Shalom House for a while, we encourage you to stop by for a visit or to schedule a retreat!



There is new furniture in the meeting space in Deep Woods Lodge.

**We have been blessed to be able to make many changes at Shalom House!**



The decks and porches have been stained.



## Shalom House Retreat Center

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WE'RE ON THE WEB!

[WWW.SHALOMHOUSERETREATCENTER.COM](http://WWW.SHALOMHOUSERETREATCENTER.COM)

Be still and know that I am God.

Ps. 46

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## Shalom House Helps Create Good Foundation for Confirmation Class by Lia Russell



St. Paul's Confirmation Student—Lia Russell

With an obscure idea of a "retreat", no prior experience and low expectations, I headed off to Shalom House in the St Paul's Catholic Church bus with my confirmation class. As the ride became longer, the urban view was replaced with smaller, distanced homes and vast expanses of fields. As we crept down

a long gravel drive surrounded by towering and leafy trees, I caught sight of a small cluster of buildings. In the crisp and untainted air, unmolested and solely among nature, I felt both very isolated, and yet surrounded by people who shared a common faith. We were treated hospitably, and enjoyed the warm and friendly atmosphere.

In the first few hours of our stay, we helped with some of the maintenance of the facility. The results were rewarding, and it was nice to know that they would improve the retreats of

groups to follow us.

One of the best aspects of the facility was the pond and several boats behind the facility, bordered by a path which snaked amidst the trees on the shore. They provided yet another tranquil location for walks and meditation, and in our case resulted in a fantastic place for boating and banter on the pond, improved by the lack of regulations and scolding parents. I liked the small ways that we were allowed to be involved in Shalom House like saying a prayer for the next occupant of your room.

During my stay at Shalom House, my youth group and I were allowed time to discuss, ask questions, and also to enjoy time to ourselves away from the hustle and distraction of our usual daily lives. The secluded location was ideal to clear our minds in order to focus and reflect on our faith.

We returned from this trip more familiar with each other, and our confirmation class' mission, and restored by a feeling of community and intimacy. Shalom House was the ideal place in which to create a good foundation for our future confirmation classes. Thank you!



The group from St. Paul's strikes a pose after mass.