

Coming to The Mountain is Coming Home

UUCA Gathering at The Mountain 2019: A Recap by Adam Griffith

Last weekend, our family of four and an additional 135 members from UUCA spent the weekend at The Mountain Retreat and Learning Center in Highlands, NC situated atop Little Scaly Mountain (elevation 4,200'). The weekend was highlighted by wonderful music, workshops, delicious meals, and a healthy dose of humor at the talent show. People ask me how I came to live in Asheville and I simply tell them I am a summer camp kid that never left and The Mountain was the biggest part.

The Mountain started in 1979 as a UU camp and conference center and has held summer camps continuously since then. Growing up in Lancaster, PA, we lived about half-way between Star Island UU Camp in NH and The Mountain, but young members of our church went south to attend camps at The Mountain instead going north. My first impressions of The Mountain in 1993 are still accurate descriptors today: inclusive, open, loving, and breathtaking. It was the first place I experienced total lack of judgments



as youth of all kinds gathered for intentional shared experiences. I knew how great The Mountain could be, but would my wife, Susan, fall in love with it the way I did? Our first trip to UUCA's Gathering at The Mountain 4 years ago didn't go so well: Susan worked a 12-hour day on Friday so we only came for one night, but I had a terrible cold and completely lost my voice. We tried the short Chinguapin hike, but turned back due to rain and low visibility. We were unable to enjoy the scenery and I couldn't sing some of my favorite songs and get to know folks better.



With that less-than-ideal experience fresh in our minds, Susan and I were nervous about how the weekend would go with two kids. Would our 2 ½ year-old toddler Simon eat the meals? Would the baby sleep well in her cardboard box? Would we feel comfortable socially with so many people we didn't know very well?

The answer to all of these questions was a resounding YES! The meals were fantastic and 5-month old baby Mia slept for 10 hours in a row! Everywhere we went, people loved Mia and wanted to hold her. She made a great centerpiece on our dining table and had attracted a troupe of groupies

by the end of the weekend. Simon loved singing and playing his cardboard banjo and hiking to Chinquapin. We attended some of the activities, but appreciated the flexibility of the a la carte schedule, which perfectly suited the needs of our family

Our family made more connections with members of the congregation at The Mountain in a single weekend than we had in all of 2019. Susan and I were overwhelmed by the love and support of the people we already knew and new friends we met there. The phrase "it takes a village to raise a child" is certainly accurate, but I am so happy to have found our village at UUCA. Thank you all for sharing your gifts of music, humor, and love for raising kids.

