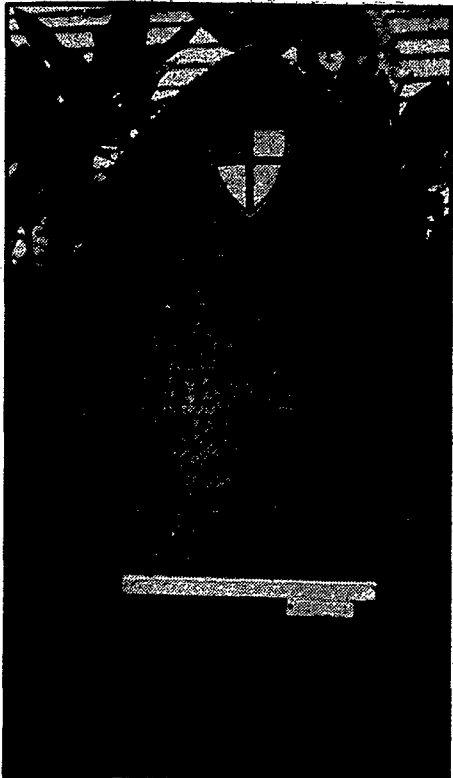


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phitheater," she said. This year they heard C. Welton Gaddy, executive director of the Interfaith Alliance, and such speakers as historian Michael Beschloss discussing American presidents.

Meanwhile, smaller gatherings for talks abound. Sister Beth LeValley, SSJ, and Harry Murray of Nazareth College, for instance, were invited to give a talk on welfare reform a few years ago.

The Jewish faith also has become a significant part of the "Chautauqua experience," and the institution is beginning an "Abrahamic Initiative" to build bridges among Jews, Christians and Muslims.

Father Donnelly recalled being impressed with Rabbi Samuel Stahl of Temple Beth-El in San Antonio, and going to hear him every afternoon. He similarly was impressed with the Rev. Joan Brown Campbell, director of Chautauqua's religion department and former general secretary of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A.



The Episcopal Chapel of the Good Shepherd hosts daily Catholic Mass.

Rev. Campbell spoke of her work to have Elian Gonzalez returned to his father in Cuba, in a custody battle over the child, who survived a shipwreck in 1999 and was claimed by relatives in Miami.

"Her pastoral sensitivity was very apparent," Father Donnelly said.

### Home away from home

Accommodations on the grounds are available for many of the 150,000 visitors each summer, and often are booked a year in advance. Some people own homes at Chautauqua and stay either for the season or year-round.

Eighteen years ago, John and Mary Ann McCabe of Rochester's St. Mary's Parish bought a house at Chautauqua with a Jewish couple, Marvin and Joan Rosenthal of Rochester. The house, now 125 years old, has a floor for each family and an attic they share to offer guests.

"My husband considers this home," said Mary Ann McCabe, a retired speech pathologist who does programming for contemporary issues at Chautauqua. They like the feel of "dropping back into the early 1900s" in terms of physical en-

vironment, and the constant learning.

"People come here because they are interested in learning about new ideas and also strengthening their beliefs," said McCabe, who serves on St. Mary's Parish Council.

"Being in Chautauqua I think you become very ecumenical," she said. "You look at life in terms of loving your neighbor. There's a certain peace that develops. ... You just develop such an interconnectedness with other people, and it really doesn't matter what faith they are or economic status they are. They are all children of God."

The closeness of the homes, people sitting out on the porches, the fact people walk everywhere, all contribute, she said. "It is an extremely friendly place."

The McCabes and Rosenthals helped host 250 Soviet Union citizens in the late 1980s, during a U.S.-Soviet conference at Chautauqua. The McCabes' visitors were two translators for government officials.

"We couldn't take them anywhere off the grounds," McCabe recalled. But, she added, "They didn't want to defect. They were very proud of their nation. It was a

very eye-opening thing."

### Visitor information

Visitors may spend from a day to the nine weeks at Chautauqua. One-day passes cost \$38, entitling the holder to lectures, concerts and most special events, with no charge for people 12 and under or 90 and older, and a reduced rate for ages 13-17. Sunday admission is free for all ages, and other discounts are available. For instance, people who sing in the choirs or teach workshops in a special-studies program can receive free gate passes for their stay.

Chris Salvatore of Wheeling, W.Va., current sacristan for the Catholic House, said the house is being renovated with the intent of renting rooms to visitors at an affordable cost.

"Most of the private homes that rent out are very expensive," he said. "We're trying to make it cheaper to come and stay."

Father Tony Rigoli, a Buffalo campus minister and a Catholic chaplain at Chautauqua for six years, said while some people call Chautauqua an "adult Disneyland," many others know nothing about it.

"A lot of people don't even know it exists," he said. "People don't know what the whole thing is about and shy away from it. It's a cultural center, a spiritual center, and they wonder, 'What does that mean?' ... I find it's the most enriching place I've ever been to."

"I think oftentimes when people go on vacation, they are running from one thing to the next, or amusement parks. Almost after you've finished the vacation, you need a vacation," Father Rigoli continued. "Here, it's the opposite." He said he enjoys simply reading, walking and bike-riding, as well as the "cultural fix" he obtains from the evening concerts and plays.

Chautauqua seems busier every year, but it remains quiet "because most people come to be introspective," Jack Lesser said.

"The only way to get people to understand this place is to invite them to come to be here."

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