

Good Folks, Good Food and Good for You

What to Look Forward to on a TOPS Retreat



By Barbara Maciejewski

Has your weight-loss journey somehow gotten stale? Have you plateaued, or are you struggling to stay in leeway? Is your motivation waning despite the wonderful support of your TOPS pals? Sounds like you could use a TOPS Retreat!

Even better than a meeting, a TOPS Retreat will re-energize you and help you recommit to your goals. Whether it's for a week or a weekend, you get time to reflect on how far you've come and where you want to be headed going forward. You'll receive hands-on instruction and the tools you need for that forward journey from an expe-

rienced, caring retreat director. And you'll get to enjoy all this in a beautiful, picturesque setting where you can relax and rejuvenate with like-minded TOPS members.

How can I say this with certainty? Last year, I attended a TOPS Retreat myself. Allow me to share my experience with you by starting with

that last, and most important, benefit first. While on retreat in Colorado Springs, Colorado, last year, it was a delight to meet so many positive, committed TOPS!

Every member at the retreat was serious and energetic about getting to or staying at goal. No one made excuses or complained, and everyone was upbeat. With all that positive energy, each person could stay focused on coming up with specific, realistic resolutions to take home.

My next great takeaway was information. As a newer member of the TOPS Headquarters team, I still had much to learn about the Food Exchange System. Our retreat director, Cynthia Mack, who thoroughly understands this plan, took the time we needed to go over, in depth, all the parts of *Real Life: The Hands-on, Pounds-off Guide* that explain the Exchange System. By the end of the retreat, all of us were excited and eager to apply everything we had learned, long-time KOPS included.

Of course, the best and most practical part of that learning occurred at mealtimes. Every day, we followed a 1,500-calorie meal plan and, not only did we get to taste delicious meals prepared using the Exchange System, we also found out how much better we felt when sticking to healthy portions. Far from feeling deprived, many TOPS members on retreat noted that the plan provided more food than what they were used to. As a retreat benefit, we also received recipes for each of the meals we were served.

If you think your weight-loss journey could



Barbara Maciejewski, assistant editor (left), shared a moment with Cynthia Mack, TOPS retreat director, in Colorado.



One tasty retreat dinner: chicken breast with cran-apple relish, brown rice, cooked vegetables, salad—and for dessert, pineapple with toasted coconut.

use a jump-start, check out our list of upcoming TOPS Retreats on page 44. Several scenic locations are available (there's even a cruise to Alaska this year!), so you can choose the getaway that works best for you. Come join your fellow TOPS on retreat and recommit to you! ■

Making History: The First TOPS Coed Retreat

Yes, you read it right. In response to feedback about the retreat program, the first TOPS coed retreat was held last May in Biloxi, Mississippi. As you can see from the picture on the opposite page, all those attending had a great time. It was a wonderful experience and a validation that this program is suited for all members.

Some of my TOPS pals asked me how a coed retreat would be handled. Would the program need to be different with men there? What about the food? How would rooming assignments work?

My response is: For those of you who don't have male chapter members, let me reassure you that it works just fine. We are all TOPS members—the rest really doesn't matter. Men struggle with weight loss and maintenance—and are in need of support—just like women.

And while many couples attending enjoyed the getaway time with their spouse, all members felt welcome and found being in mixed groups really enhanced the event.

Moving forward, the retreat program will accommodate the coed experience wherever facilities allow for it. A coed retreat may be just the motivation you have been looking for.

—Cynthia Mack

Barbara Maciejewski is the assistant editor of TOPS News. Since returning from retreat, she has been regularly walking the Esther Manz Memorial Garden path at TOPS Headquarters.