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SUMMARY OF CAMPHILL PRESENTATION BY CORNELIUS AND ELISABETH PIETZNER

On Feb. 28, 1999, Parents Planning Programs for the Developmentally Disabled hosted Cornelius Pietzner, President of Camphill Association of North America, and his wife, Elisabeth, at the Melbourne Beach Hilton to talk to parents, educators, representatives of social services and various organizations for the special needs population of Florida. We have been familiar with Camphill's impressive work for 30 years and have recently visited five of their communities in NY and PA. Our goal is to work towards making a Camphill community in Florida a reality so that Florida will be first in excellence for the developmentally disabled instead of 49th in the United States. To realize this possibility, it will be essential to form a strong core of interested parents and families.

We are encouraged by Governor Bush's message of "INNOVATIVE, CONSUMER DRIVEN, FAMILY ORIENTED AND CHOICE-BASED" options.

The Pietzners have both been directors of Camphill communities for 15 years. They gave us some background of Camphill's origin and philosophy, showed slides, answered questions and discussed issues which concern parents.

The following are a few of the highlights:

Elisabeth explained that Camphill's foundation is a philosophical one called "Anthroposophy," meaning human wisdom. It has a strongly Christian orientation, but is nonsectarian. "It is all about sharing a life style that is vibrant with meaning, where all members share a respect for spirituality, social relationships, individuality and freedom to grow." More than a place, Camphill is a movement.

Cornelius explained, "The staff or 'co-workers' at Camphill are dedicated to building a life of community together with people of special needs, in a holistic approach to life, that is, a comprehensive approach, where each person can find his or her contribution to an integrated life." This idea had its inspiration from a Viennese pediatrician, Dr. Karl Konig, who fled Nazi Germany in 1938 with a group of his colleagues. They established the first Camphill village in Aberdeen, Scotland.

Cornelius explained: "The concept of community inclusion was one that Camphill pioneered very strongly, where residents and people of special needs, their 'companions,' live together in the community in as normal a relationship as possible. There are approximately 90 communities worldwide, 10 in the U.S., each with its own individual personality and function. All are charitable organizations. All have their own programmatic orientation."

Elisabeth stressed that the underlying philosophy of Camphill is the respect for human spirituality, the importance of social context, that is, life-sharing with family and friends and recognition of the worth of the individual contributions. *(But not in terms of money. If you'd ever had your child come home with a check for 18 cents, you'd appreciate how demeaning that can*

be!) It accentuates abilities rather than disabilities, and values individual initiative.

At Camphill formal schooling begins at age 6, at Beaver Run, a Waldorf School, and continues to age 18. From 18 to 25 the school concept extends to a "college" at Soltane Community, where students are trained in various vocational skills, have job trainers and coordinators. Some students are placed in different organizations and businesses in the local communities to gain work experience.

School after age 25 in a larger sense is living day by day in the many other communities like Copake Village and Triform in NY or Kimberton Hills, PA. Cornelius remarked: "Education doesn't exist in a vacuum, but throughout life, day by day at Camphill." As shown in Cornelius' slides, school is "work that has a relationship to the larger social context," whether it's in the ceramic, woodworking, weaving or candle making studios, where the surrounding woods and rolling hillsides can be seen through soaring windows. Work might be milking the cows, farming on the many working farms, or in the health food store, gift shop, coffee shop or bakery. It might be interfacing with the neighboring towns in marketing activities, or in civic beatification projects or in the interchange of cultural events -- concerts, performances, lectures. "Wherever it is, work and social interaction are at the core of educational growth."

Concerning culture, Cornelius made this point: "I can't underscore the strength and vitality and the diversity of the cultural life enough. There's a tremendous amount going on. There's not a lot of television at Camphill. People are busy from morning to evening. There's a whole slew, a whole menu of things going on. They're working or they're going out or they are in this course or that program. There might be sports in the evening or a film club. By the time nine o'clock comes around, they're all tuckered out."

In the various craft programs at Camphill there is, in Cornelius' words, "a lot of creative expression and a continuity of process. If you give someone a chance to do something creative, it's amazing what's in there! If you are craft oriented, you know that you have to develop some very precise work habits that require judgment, attention, application and precision."

Concerning the philosophy of vocation and work, Cornelius states: "One of the things I have found -- I don't know how this is for you -- is that when the school district situation is over, at age 21 or 22 . . . and the menu shrinks and it more or less dries up, what remains, basically, tends to be some pretty dry vocational stuff, by and large. . . . The vocational orientation, to my mind, is certainly not something I would want to do for the rest of my life. Camphill's approach to vocation is a little bit more broadly based. It's not just the teaching of particular mechanical skills and functions, but it's really trying to find work that has a relationship to the larger social context, depending on the particular skills and interests of the person. That's really an important kind of philosophical approach to vocation and to work. For some people, their expression of work is milking that cow which you saw in the slide, and for others, it might be working in the Kimberton Hills Health food store, unloading two trucks a day and doing all the stocking. That person is really a valuable employee. They really count on him to be there and he feels that. And that's important that he feels that. His sense of fulfillment and participation are there! . . . Camphill has a huge array of opportunities for work and for vocations, regardless of whether it's urban or suburban or rural. Camphills don't work without people with special needs. It's a

working community. We're equal partners. Everyone has a part to play."

Social life at Camphill may be a Mardi Gras celebration, a film club, visiting at someone else's house for lunch, a dance, games after dinner, a play by one group or other. The accent is on activity and interaction. To quote Cornelius: "The proof of the pudding is: Are the people happy? Does this make a difference in their learning skills? Is there a sense of fellowship, a sense of friendship, a sense of belonging? I think these are the barometers in terms of success."

(If you go to the Camphill Communities in NY and PA as we did last June, you will be struck by the overall peace and tranquility and a sense of the aesthetic. You see it throughout -- in the artwork, gardens, farms, and architecture.) Cornelius points out as he shows a slide of the stunning cultural hall, "There is a high quality of care in the use of building materials and in the overall standards."

Concerning long-term care and continuity of service, Cornelius explained: "Camphill is open ended and multigenerational. Some folks have been there for over 50 years. For the past 40 years, there are quite a few instances where the parents have passed on and the villagers are taken care of . . . It's our responsibility to make sure that whatever the next step might be, is the right step."

Concerning location, the question was asked if Camphill could be done in an urban setting. The answer was, yes. Cornelius' wife, Elizabeth, said she would love to have the opportunity to start an urban Camphill, that it had all kinds of possibilities for a vibrant community life. Cornelius stated, "The thing to emphasize is that people don't just go off and start a Camphill, because it's not a franchise business. It takes a lot of time and work to start a Camphill community. These are working communities."

How to start a Camphill?

Cornelius stated, "I really try to encourage and empower parents to actually dare to use their imagination. So much depends on them to bring along people who are working at agencies and in the state system. . . . Talk about it. . . . Do some group work and some community building. That's what we did in California, which is a highly regulated state. We've had a huge challenge to help some of the state regulators understand that we want to partner with them in whatever opportunity that presents itself." His advice to parents: "Put together a good solid idea that's cost effective, package it and present it. . . . My interest is not to have a Camphill in Florida necessarily. not that I am not interested in it, but to see how we can work together to see what is real for the situation here and the people here. Everything has to be indigenous to the situation. That's the way the best Camphills happen. Camphill Botswana is very different from Camphill Finland. So Camphill Florida is going to be very different from Camphill California or Camphill PA. . . . I know that you have a new governor and that there is 210 million dollars available . . . From the material that was sent to me, it looks like there might be a window of opportunity if there was the possibility to mobilize and to present a case why your wishes and your interests might be of advantage and might be of benefit to the citizens of the state of Florida."

"But," he added, "the hardest part is not going to be the money, but the co-workers, the people who will do it day by day, who will care for our sons and daughters in the future. How to strengthen and build that. The key question is, how could you create such a life that people would want to live it? How are you going to attract the people who have the integrity and are willing to do life sharing? We've found that people come for very different reasons. They are interested in serving in an integrated and holistic lifestyle. . . . We tend to get some highly motivated people who have some ideals they want to try out. One co-worker has been at Camphill for over 50 years. The average length of stay is 17 years."

What about cost? "Cost structures at Camphill are fairly uniform in the various communities, depending on where the funding comes from. Tuition ranges from \$25, 000 to \$28,000. That may sound like a lot but most residential arrangements cost upwards of \$40,000." Cornelius cited a case in Florida where he heard that some folks in Florida were receiving services in excess of \$180,000. (*Our own observation is that our son receives roughly \$23,000 in funding if we add up Social Security, day program, transportation, respite care, support coordinator. This does not include residential placement.*) He stated, "The reason for cost efficiency at Camphill is because of a shared economy -- where co-workers don't take a salary, as such, and because the administrative overhead, which is typically one of the largest cost items of running organizations, is comparatively very low."

Commentary:

We would ask the regulators and legislators and people who are funding services, to consider:

- Do we have places and programs for our children that provide --*
- . a total quality of life which includes social, cultural growth and educational/vocational development ?*
- . highly trained, stable and accountable staff with 24 hour supervision?*
- . challenging activities that develop creativity and self-expression?*
- . opportunities to develop work skills that are functional in the context of life style and community?*
- . aesthetic and least restrictive work environment?*
- . family and community orientation?*
- . opportunities to develop feelings of self-worth that come from being a contributing, integrated member of community?*

This is what Camphill represents.

Gov. Bush has recommended the allocation of \$210,000 for programs that are "innovative, consumer driven, family oriented and choice-based." It's up to us, the advocates, to follow through!

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If you would like to be a working member of the Camphill Connection Project to establish a Camphill Florida, please let us know. We need energetic people. Whatever skills and experience you may have to set this project in motion are very much needed. Please respond via our E-mail:

klausman@iu.net or Fax: (407) 953-6710 or Phone: (407) 724-8899. A complete copy of the text of the Pietzners' presentation is available on request.

For more information about Camphill call (610) 469-0933. Or visit their
Web Site: <http://camphillassociation.org/history.html>