

The



Newsboy

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Joyful Journey Hot Springs Spa



Elaine Blumenhein at Joyful Journey Hot Springs Spa. The "hot" pool (top photo) and the "medium" pool (108 °F and 104 °F respectively) are filled with naturally mineral-rich water that is reputed to heal aches and pains and rejuvenate the body.

A farm girl from Kansas with a degree in nursing, Elaine Blumenhein loves the Valley. "I raised my family, my three children, in Boulder. We came to the Valley for the first time in the mid 80s. When I saw this Valley, I knew this was my heart's home. How did it take me so long to discover it?"

Blumenhein and her former husband, Dick, purchased a second home in Crestone where they came frequently with their children during the late 80s. In 1987, they purchased over 500 acres with an artesian hot spring at the far north end of the Valley near the junction of Highways 17 and 160.

Once known as the Mineral Hot Springs Spa, the property had fallen into disrepair. "In the early 1900s, this was a resort. The railroad stopped here, bringing people over from Colorado Springs and the front range. There was a large outdoor pool where many of the Valley's old timers remember learning how to swim. There was a restaurant and a dance hall. It was a little village with its own post office. But it didn't survive," Blumenhein said. In the 60s and 70s, the abandoned resort became a stopping point for hippies who wanted to enjoy the springs. For a while, the property was even used as a hog farm.

When her family acquired the property in 1987, some of the buildings were still standing. Most were not safe. When she became the property's sole owner and caretaker in 1998, Blumenhein made removing the derelict buildings and restoring the land a priority.

Today only the stories of bygone days remain. Now, visitors to Joyful Journey Hot Springs Spa enjoy a modern bath house complete with geothermal radiant heat and a redwood paneled sauna. Outdoors, three natural geothermal artesian pools offer a respite from stress and chance to unwind in healing waters.

"It starts with the walk from the parking lot," Blumenhein said. "This is the beginning of the shedding of stress. We always keep fresh flowers and quiet music playing in the main bathhouse. We do not subscribe to

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daily newspapers. Our employees try to keep conversations positive. Our goal is to create the most stress-free environment possible.”

Inside the bath house, attendants collect fees, book lodging, direct guests to changing rooms and schedule spa treatments such as massages and facials. Swim suits and towels are available for a nominal fee. Or, bring your own. Don't worry if you forget something. Personal amenities, including snacks, lotions, and other items are also available in the spa lobby.

It's hard not to relax once you are in the pools. Pools are maintained at 98 °F, 104 °F and 108 °F (37 °C, 40 °C, 42 °C). The water is not treated with chemicals. Each night, the pools are drained, cleaned and refilled. The water contains boron, lithium, calcium and arsenic. Many visitors believe this combination of minerals has exceptional healing qualities. Blumenhein said, “The balance of calcium and boron is perfect for helping to relieve pain from arthritis.”

One couple travels twice a year from England to enjoy the rejuvenating waters. Another regular guest travels from Creede once a week to enjoy a soak.

“It always astounds me to hear where people are from,” Blumenhein said. “People travel here from all over the world. One of our annual guests even runs a hot springs in Yugoslavia. And the history of these springs amazes me too. The Native Americans used this water for ceremonial purposes. This water has a tremendous history of healing.”

Yes, you will meet world travelers at Joyful Journey. But the vast majority of visitors are Coloradans. Among her regular customers, Blumenhein counts

ranchers, construction workers and others who work outdoors. The spa offers special rates for residents of Saguache County.

She said, “I



remember the first time I got into the springs. I felt that this was happy, joyful water. This is how I came up with the name. As I see it, we are all on a journey on this earth and this is a stop along the way. Some people tell me it's not a good name. Other people, especially local people, still call it Mineral Hot Springs as they always have. That's fine with me. It's still the same water.”

At first, Blumenhein lived on site. “But,” she said, “I gave up trying to live here after the first couple of years. I did everything from cleaning pools, rooms and the bath house to running the front desk. Once people realized I was here all the time, they would knock on the door and ask me to open for them at all sorts of hours. It got to be too much.” She hired more help and moved into her home in Crestone.

Next, she added lodging for summer months—at least that was the plan. She added yurts on wooden platforms. Then she added teepees and a greenhouse. Then, people started asking to stay in the yurts in fall and winter so she installed heaters. However, the accommodations were a bit Spartan for some.

Blumenhein said, “The yurts and teepees have a shared bath house that you have to walk to. Many people, especially older people, don't want to go outdoors to a bathhouse in the middle of the night. I was getting a lot of requests for lodging with attached private baths. People also asked me to add conference facilities. Some people believe in the philosophy, ‘build it and they will come.’ In my case, it's the other way around. You better build it because they are coming.”

It was at least two years in the planning and two years in construction; but, now, the springs can reclaim their place as a destination resort. In mid-August, Joyful Journey celebrated the grand opening of an 11-room lodge/conference center.

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The reception area in the main spa building. Guests who don't bring their own towels and swimsuits may rent these items. Essential oil blends, including blends created specifically for Joyful Journey by Assistant Manager, Marquita Oliver, are available. Taryn Burkhardt helps orient visitors to the spa's amenities.



With tile floors and crisp interiors, the rooms offer luxury in a non-allergenic setting. Luxury linens, beds, robes and other amenities all add to the feeling that a stay at Joyful Journey can help eliminate stress from your life. Room configurations range from two single beds to a complete studio apartment. A spacious continental breakfast area is located near the center of the new facility.

The large conference room can seat up to 100 and offers an environmentally friendly well-lit space for meetings of all types. The building incorporates many energy-saving features such as motion lighting in the bathrooms and clerestory windows.

Blumenhein relied upon local contractors for as much of the project as she could. The furniture was all purchased from Rustic Log Furniture in Alamosa. Ben Caffrey served as the project's construction manager. Jennifer Thomson and Tedd Brumm hand-painted walls in two new massage rooms.

Is she done? Nope. Next Blumenhein has five new pools planned including a private soaking pool for lodge guests. She's already improving landscaping around the new buildings. Then she plans to upgrade the main spa building to add new treatment rooms. Of the new lodge facility, she said, "We'll see how this goes. If more rooms are required, I'll add them."

Her long-term vision? "My dream is to create a village, kind of an elder-care center with families of all ages living here. When you are older it's good to keep your mind active. So I picture conferences and lectures. I would like to see more greenhouses. I would like for this development to be as self-sustaining and self-reliant as possible. I want the rest of what I build to be powered by alternative energy."

It's just a dream. But Elaine Blumenhein has a way of making her dreams come true. ❧

For more information call 719-256-4329 or visit the Joyful Journey Hot Springs Spa web site at www.joyfuljourneyhotsprings.com



One of the new guest rooms. The new facility includes a conference center with room for up to 100 seated guests, two new spa treatment rooms, 11 guest rooms and a continental breakfast dining area for guests.

Preparing Your Home for Winter

It may not feel like winter yet; but, here in the Valley, winter weather will be upon us before you know it. That makes September a great month to prepare your home for the winter heating season.

Daytime temperatures are still generally warm enough to get work done outside; but, not so warm that it's too early to make changes. Here are some great energy-saving ideas:

- ✓ Trim trees and shrubs that have grown up in front of windows—especially on the south side of your home where sunshine could help provide some solar heating benefits during the day.
- ✓ If you opened foundation vents for the summer, now's the time to close them up again.
- ✓ Examine your roof and flashings, to make sure spring and summer winds have not caused damage. If they have, repair them now. Leaks can cause structural damage. Additionally, if insulation in the roof gets wet, it will work less efficiently.
- ✓ Seal up drafts. Check all exterior doors to make sure you can't see any gaps or daylight between the door and the frame. Pay particular attention to the bottom of the door and the sill. Weather stripping and door sweeps can become damaged during the summer. Often, the damage isn't noticed until you feel a draft! Replace or adjust weather-stripping that is damaged or worn now. Also, check the weather-stripping on windows. Freshen up caulking anywhere that heat-robbing drafts can make their way in. Put up storm windows or cover windows with a layer of plastic to eliminate drafts.
- ✓ Check your heating system. No matter whether you heat with baseboard electric heat or wood, it's a good idea to make sure your heaters are clean and ready for operation. Tune up furnaces and change filters. Clean out chimneys. Make sure everything is in good working order.
- ✓ Add extra insulation in your ceilings and floors if you can. Insulate around exposed hot water pipes and check your water heater to see if it feels hot. If it does, it may benefit from an insulating blanket. ❧

