

Ascending to spiritual high

Workshop promotes mix of Christianity and Eastern religion

Eyebrows shoot up if you ask people how they'd feel about taking in a personal ascension workshop. Does that mean meditating yourself off the ground? Is this some kind of multi-level marketing scheme? What do you mean by ascension?

Darrell Hubbell is getting used to that kind of reaction. He has been organizing these ascension workshops, like the one coming up February 21 to 23 in Prince George, and he has to answer the incredulous looks all the time. Darrell is a member of the Society For Ascension, which, in simplified terms, promotes a better life on earth through positive attitudes. It is connected to Christianity, but also has roots in eastern Asia which makes for a strange mix of religion. Is it a religion?

"No," says Darrell. "It's not a religion. It's a method of connecting each person to their own spiritual core. The belief is that if a person is connected to their own spiritual centre they will live life in their own wonderful, produc-



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FRANK PEEBLES/FREE PRESS

tive manner...without having rules imposed upon them."

The rules he's referring to are the tenets and principles that most, if not all, religions construct to govern their followers. The Society For Ascension is slightly different.

"The historic roots go back to John the Divine, who wrote the Book of Revelations in the Bible," explains Darrell. "The story is, after he'd seen the future he took his own disciples to

the Himalayas and founded a monastery to preserve the true teachings of Christ." Which apparently don't look much like the common Catholic or Protestant versions today.

Darrell is about to leave Prince George and go to North Carolina where the Society For Ascension has a monastery. He will be trained as a teacher of Ascension. His wife Diane is already there and on her way to the title of Ishaya, or

teacher. He stresses, though, that only a willing few ever take Ascension to that extreme and it's not a brain washing cult. They don't require participants to abandon your past lifestyle or give up your possessions.

"You don't need to 'believe' anything we say," he explains. "Ascension is largely a mechanical process. It requires willingness to do it, not belief in it. Ascension is just a form of meditation, but not one that is designed to block out thought and make your mind blank. This is active meditation, where you try to relieve your central nervous system of all stress." Again in simplified terms, it requires you to think happy thoughts and gently replace all negative or vexing thoughts with positive ones that will take you closer to your spiritual core.

"It's symptomatic of our society that we want to find joy and contentment externally - bigger, better, faster toys. These don't satisfy long-term needs for happiness," says Darrell.

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