



Networking to Grow Spirit in the Desert

Nola Mellstrom was appointed to the Board of Directors in 2018, bringing her management and people skills from her nursing career to Spirit in the Desert.

She grew up in the small town of Roseau, Minnesota near the Canadian border, a town well-known for its youth hockey programs. Nola attended St. Olaf College for two years and completed her nursing degree at Minneapolis General Hospital.

Because of her wide range of nursing experience including, medical, surgical, psychiatric, and chemical dependency treatment, she was well qualified for a job later in her career monitoring the appropriateness and quality of care. She said, "I missed the hands-on nursing with patients but this job was a new and rewarding challenge."

The pleasant weather attracted Nola to spend winters in Arizona beginning in 2000. A friend invited her to her church's bible study which was being held at Spirit in the Desert. Shortly after that she was back in Minnesota and learned about a fund-raising event being held in the Twin Cities for Spirit in the Desert. She attended that event in 2003, learned more about Spirit in the Desert, and has been attending those fund raisers ever since. She has also participated in fund raising events at the center in Carefree. While attending a Luther Hostel retreat, she observed the enthusiasm of the participants and said, "The experience of the retreat filled them with Spirit."

In 2016, Nola purchased a home in Sun City to live all year in Arizona. She is a member of American Lutheran Church, the congregation of Mac and Maybelle Estrem, who gave the gift to purchase and expand the facility in Carefree, making Spirit in the Desert Retreat Center a reality.

As a director, Nola will have the responsibility, along with other directors and the staff of the center, for guiding the center into its future. She said, "I like the mission statement: *Spirit is a holy place where people experience hospitality and renew their callings in the world.*" She added, "It is an honor for me to be on the board. I want more people to know about the center. One of my roles is to help with outreach and networking so more people know about Spirit in the Desert and it how continues to grow and serve anyone who needs the renewal of a retreat."