

New Life Grows on Nomad's Land

Counterculture farm's organic community a rich soil for God's love



Three couples. One vision. And a 40-acre farm. That's the genesis of Nomad's Land, a cooperative community that aims to give road-weary travelers a place to rest and find fellowship with like-minded believers—and offer a new beginning to hippies, gutter punks, train hoppers and societal outcasts.

Joshua Hanson and his wife, Shallyn, along with Beau and Ashley Armistead, founders of Lone Sheep Ministries, and evangelists Al and Tina Nord, purchased the Alabama farm to fulfill a common vision: bringing together nomadic ministers and counterculture youth for an organic experience sprinkled with the love of God.

"In the past we were on the road 24/7 and felt a lot like Abraham—waiting on the land God would show him," Hanson says. "We always dreamed of having a safe and healthy environment, a ministry base where we could bring people to grow in the love of Christ."

You might call it a Matthew 11:28 ministry. Nomad's Land echoes the words of Jesus: "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light" (vv. 28-30).

Nomad's Land visitors work in the organic garden and learn to build houses using natural materials such as clay and straw. Early plans for the 40-acre farm, which is located near Rainbow City, Ala., about 45 miles east of Birmingham, include

a library and a multipurpose room for classes and music sessions. Hanson also hopes to organize music festivals there. It's all part of attracting nomadic ministers and nomadic youth.

Hanson can relate to today's nomadic youth. He's a former Grateful Dead follower who crashed his psychedelic hippie bus into what is now the International House of Prayer in Kansas City, Mo. The accident got his attention, led him to accept Jesus as Lord and ignited his desire to share his faith—especially with those on the fringe. He founded Jesus Loves You, a counterculture ministry that held its first outreach 14 years ago by serving free food and sharing the love of Jesus at an annual New Age festival called a Rainbow Gathering.

Although Nomad's Land doesn't charge people to rest at its haven, it does cost money to operate the facilities. Hanson has organized unique fundraisers, such as an auction and a pilgrimage.

The Second Annual Pilgrimage to Nomad's Land saw participants raising money by walking the 45 miles from Birmingham to Rainbow City. Following a big brown school bus down a major roadway, a colorful band of musicians, hippies, nomads and ministers came from all across the U.S. to help raise funds and awareness for the refuge.

But most days it's just Jesus and the nomads.

"A typical day at Nomad's Land begins with a Bible study and a community breakfast, followed by work in the garden or building projects," Hanson explains. "We might take our produce to a local market or get involved in community service. We hope to bring in teachers and musicians to hold workshops or classes. In the evening we like to have a campfire and a drum circle."