

# What in the RV world is Escapees?

by Janice Lasko #14104

What do you mean write a *short* article about the Escapees RV Club?" I asked Escapees President Cathie Carr. Short won't do justice to what a mere \$60-a-year membership fee offers. But, then I'm prejudiced when it comes to the Escapees RV Club.

My husband, Gabby, and I began RVing in 1985. Within two years, we were full-time RVers and we took no prisoners (pun intended). No house, no jobs, no children, no telephones, no commitments, just the two of us and a passel of maps.

Another two years passed before reality set in and we were no longer vowing not to join any membership campgrounds. We began signing on the dotted line almost with fervor. For another two years (by now it's 1989), all we wanted to do was tour and find inexpensive places to camp.

Then friends told us about Escapees. And, from the moment we mailed in our first check, we firmly believe our lives changed for the better.

## **It's the people who matter**

In addition to the many services the club provides for its members, it's the people in the club who make all the difference in the world. It doesn't matter what their background is or what they did in their other life. The bond that has brought so many people together is the support we give each other and the knowledge of RVing we share. And, because we truly care about one another, those who can make parking places available for members who pass through a particular area.

As a matter of fact, support, knowledge, and parking are the three words that make up the Escapees acronym, SKP. *Support, knowledge and parking*. These are the bonds of serious RVers. It matters not whether we're full-timers, part-timers, or RVers or folks who only get to RV on weekends and vacation; it's this philosophy that holds us together.

## **Using the umbrella**

Escapees is like a gigantic umbrella. When opened wide, the spokes of the umbrella branch out in many directions, each spoke offering a service or activity or social group within the club. The cloth of the umbrella joins and overlaps the spokes; members may join any number of social groups they wish and utilize all the services the club offers.

The handle of the umbrella supports the club with a dedicated staff of employees who work, for the most part, at national headquarters in Livingston, Texas.

There are the Birds of a Feather (BOF) groups, which are like-interest groups; the club also boasts 51 regional chapters throughout the United States, Canada, and Mexico. The chapters coordinate luncheons, rallies, and host get-togethers on a regular basis. The work ethic of the dedicated chapters and BOFs represents the tip of the umbrella.

Then there are Escapades, week-long gatherings in excess of 1000 rigs offering 60 seminars and workshops to hone participants' RV knowledge. The daily seminars are packed with nuts-and-bolts information. Whether you are just getting started in weekend RVing or you're a veteran full-timer, attending Escapade will help you gain the most value, fun, and adventure from your RV investment. The seminars, craft and hobby workshops, a market area offering RVers specialty products and services, and evening entertainment will keep you busy and involved. Individual chapters and BOFs meet on a regular basis during Escapade. SKP Co-Ops and Rainbow Parks are represented, too, which leads me to mention another area of Escapees, the park system.

Escapees RV Club offers its members a variety of RV parking options. There are eight Rainbow Parks, 11 SKP Co-Op parks, and nearly 1,000 commercial RV parks in the Escapees Discount Parks program. Rainbow Parks are wholly owned by the Escapees RV Club. The Rainbow parks are located along the sun belt so traveling Escapees have parking options available to them 12-months a year. All Rainbow Parks offer an RV park with daily, weekly, and some monthly rates. Lease lots and deeded lots are available in some of the Rainbow Parks. Four of the Rainbow Parks offer ERPU sites (Escapees Rainbow Parks Unlimited), which are five-year-lease lots.

### **Miss Kay's dream comes true**

I can't go on without talking about CARE (Continuing Assistance for Retired Escapees). Not too many years ago, I heard Joe and Kay Peterson, founders of Escapees, talking about Miss Kay's Dream. This dream was to provide flexible health care in a facility that would offer members a place to stay during recuperation from any long- or short-term illness. This is no longer a dream. CARE is the only facility of its kind in the RV industry. From broken bones to Alzheimer's and other dementia, CARE provides professional help in a caring community of fellow RVers next to Rainbow's End in Livingston, Texas. CARE is designed specifically for RVers who need a place to mend or to give caregivers a chance to have some time to themselves. Participants attend a supervised program of activities and meals during the day and go home to the comfort of their RV at night. No one likes to think about a time, due to accident or illness, when they must rely heavily on others. But, if that time comes, it's comforting to know that CARE is there as a safety net.

One day I received a message from headquarters asking if I'd be interested in working in Livingston for Escapees. Out of curiosity, I interviewed for the job to be editor of *Escapees* magazine. Although Gabby and I had no intention of settling down to such a challenging commitment, the temptation was too great to resist. After all, we are surrounded by people who love to travel and be active, people who know how to share and who care. The club is dedicated to supporting all RVers and holds a special place in many Escapees hearts, especially mine. Like I said, I'm prejudiced.

813-0307