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## Circle of spirited women

July 10, 2006 9:26 AM

Workshop provides fun, empowerment, creative playfulness and inspiration to attendees

With all the "how to" and "fix it" messages that Madison Avenue churns out on a daily basis, I am not surprised that Nancy Mills' inspirational, women's empowerment community and playful workshops have grown by leaps and bounds since she put up that first flier in a downtown Santa Barbara restaurant three years ago.

Former editor and publisher of the Travelin' Woman newsletter, Nancy has led more than 50 Spirited Women's workshops for ages 13 and older (two in my own backyard) in 20 cities across the country. As of this July, more than 600 women have attended the creative and self-expressive three-hour afternoon journeys that are designed to tap into their aliveness.

Following the 9/11 World Trade Center disaster, the New York publishing world rejected Nancy's manuscript based on "The Spirited Woman's Approach to Life." For her, this was a crucial turning point, and she turned her idea into a basis for a women-only workshop that provides fun, empowerment, creative playfulness and inspiration to its attendees. She believed it was an ideal opportunity for women going through life's transitions.

"How do you become a spirited woman?" I asked her.

She replied: "You already are a spirited woman. Every woman is born a spirited woman. Your spirit is your aliveness, your birthright, what lives inside you. And it's free. You do not need to be fixed or learn how to be. 'You are enough as you are' is the bottom line."

The experience of a workshop left a marked impression on her clients.

"The workshop is so uplifting and energizing," said Marilyn McGraw, who attended a Santa Barbara workshop. "It struck both a spiritual and personal chord with me. No one wanted to leave at the end." And Kim Corbin of San Francisco said, "I love sitting around the in-circle of women where the intention is to openly and honestly share our lives. I love how I see myself in other people's stories and love to hear how other women speak from the heart -- it helps me know I am not alone in this adventure called life."

The Spirited Woman World has grown not only geographically, but also commercially. The Web site, e-newsletter and online store feature colorful accessories such as scarves, journals, blogs and Nancy's latest venture, "The Spirited Woman's Circle," an interactive "teleseminar." The up-close-and-personal phone conversation series (like the old-fashioned party lines) invites high-profile women writers, actresses, radio personalities and top editors to speak. Each call is limited to 99 women. Nancy moderates the calls and interviews the guests and focuses on their journeys to success.

For the first half hour, Nancy interviews each guest. In the second half hour, callers ask questions and chat with each guest without leaving their own homes.

For me, the opportunity to hear them speak live and ask questions by phone while I sit in my pajamas holding a cup of coffee or tea made me feel like I was at an FDR fireside chat.

"The famous women in our circle so far have sold more than 5 million books, had several made into hit movies, and none of them has ever done a teleseminar before," Nancy said.



### Life

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And the reason to participate in the SW Circle? To uplift yourself and appreciate the message that anything is possible in your life and your career.

Past women in the series have included: Elizabeth Forsythe Hailey, author of "A Woman of Independent Means"; Janet Fitch, who wrote "White Oleander," an Oprah's Book Club pick; NPR radio personality Fran Halpern; and Selena Templeton, calendar editor for The Hollywood Reporter.

Among this season's guests is actress and author Marcia Wallace (she played Carol on "The Bob Newhart Show"). Wallace, who wrote "Don't Look Back, We're Not Going That Way," will talk Tuesday about challenges in her life, how her book was rejected by publishers again and again, and how her long road to self-publishing finally paid off.

Other guests: Rochelle Krich, award-winning author of 14 mystery novels, from "Where's Mommy Now?" to her best-selling Molly Blume mystery series (Aug. 1); Fannie Flagg, author of "Fried Green Tomatoes" (Sept. 5); and The Saucy Sisters, Barbara Nowak and Bev

Wichman, TV and radio personalities and authors of "The Saucy Sisters' Guide to Wine," who will talk about their new wine diet (Oct. 10).

Judy Foreman's Trends column appears every other Monday in the Life section. E-mail: [life@newspress.com](mailto:life@newspress.com).

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#### CIRCLE YOUR CALENDAR

The new Spirited Woman's Circle, an exclusive monthly one-hour phone conversation series, is held the first Tuesday of each month (except on holidays) at 10 a.m. It costs \$15, or \$55 for a four-conversation series.

Nancy's next workshop in Santa Barbara is from 1 to 4 p.m. on July 22 at a private estate. It costs \$95. (A special mother/daughter rate is \$175.) Refreshments are included. Reservations required. Sign up online at [www.thespiritedwoman.com](http://www.thespiritedwoman.com) or call 698-3555.

The next workshop in Los Angeles is on July 29 at The Black Box Theatre.

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