

Nonprofit Youth Hostel Faces Insurance Woes

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MILANVILLE, PA — In an effort to adapt to the insurance crisis which has swept the nation this year, Bud Rue of the Innisfree Youth Hostel recently announced an across the board “insurance surcharge” at the nonprofit bed and breakfast facility located near the Skinners Falls rapids on the Upper Delaware River.

Like many other nonprofit organizations locally and nationally, Innisfree’s public liability premium skyrocketed this year to \$4000, up from \$400 in 1985 — a 1000% jump, according to Rue.

All hostel guests will be charged one dollar above the rate for the room they stay in, plus a 10% increase on meals, said Rue. Basic lodging costs at Innisfree vary from \$7 to \$25 a night. Sleeping accommodations range from a simple bunk with no linen to a self-contained, fully-furnished cottage with all the comforts of home. Innisfree has a sleeping capacity of 55 for groups of an educational or recreational nature. The hostel is staffed by volunteers.

While the corporation which runs the facility has never filed a claim for either liability or fire insurance in its 16-year existence, Rue said, “We find ourselves being tagged with a \$4000 insurance premium, which represents 40% of our gross income last year. It seems a little

unreasonable to me.

Innisfree has never operated as a business and exists “to provide lodging and meals to people of limited means who have an appreciation for the area,” according to a brochure. Some guests work in exchange for their stay, but now even they will be asked to contribute to the insurance fund, Rue said.

The board of directors of Innisfree Corporation supports legislative measures to curb frivolous lawsuits, outlandish jury awards, and other factors which have led to the present crisis in the insurance industry.

“There needs to be more public control over the assets of insurance companies,” asserted board president Rue. Working with lawyers, “they’ve got to reach some kind of compromise in terms of caps for liability — like pain and suffering. Sure, there’s pain and suffering, but does money make it better?” he asked.

Innisfree endorses the “tort reform” legislation proposed by Pennsylvania State Representative Jerry Birmelin and others, and urges interested people to contact their lawmakers to ask assistance in pushing such measures rapidly through the legislative process. Birmelin may be contacted at 214 Ninth Street, Honesdale, Pennsylvania 18431.