

# **OMEGA AT THE CROSSINGS CELEBRATE THE JOURNEY**

By Amy E. Lemen

## **Natural Awakenings**

Omega at The Crossings is a progressive learning center and gathering place in the heart of the Texas Hill Country. Founded by Joyce and Ken Beck in partnership with the renowned Omega Institute for Holistic Studies in Rhinebeck, New York, The Crossings offers a welcoming setting in which to explore new ideas, spiritual paths, holistic practices, healthy living, psychology, dance, movement and art.

More than four years in the making, The Crossings was born of the Beck's desire to give back to the community. Ken Beck was one of the first employees at Dell, Inc. in 1988 and reaped the rewards when the company grew extraordinarily successful. With the shared vision of wife Joyce, a certified bioenergetics therapist and student of mind-body-soul studies, the Beck's put serious thought into what they wanted to do with their lives in retirement.

“We dreamed of a place that would be a retreat center, one that would encourage growth, balance and sanctuary,” says Crossings co-founder Ken Beck. “You go through the gate, and it's magical. People feel this is something special.”

The Beck's brainstormed for more than a year to create a place that would inspire people to find peace and balance between their work, personal and spiritual lives. Having been introduced to The Omega Institute by a mutual friend, they discovered the transforming effect its offerings had on people and wanted to bring that to Austin's beautiful Hill Country setting.

“This is a learning facility where people can take home new tools to heal and pursue wellness,” says Ken Beck. “It’s non-denominational, but there is a connection to a supreme force or being and the classes and teachings stem from that.”

## **Workshops That Embrace**

Most importantly, balance in all aspects of life is key to The Crossings’ overall philosophy, as is teaching others.

“It’s so easy to get unfocused, unbalanced,” says Beck. “You’re a better person if you’re involved in all aspects of your life, and that’s our teaching paradigm.”

Opened in September 2003, classes at The Crossings include workshops and retreats designed by the Omega Institute that embrace a wide range of subjects. Taught by well-known faculty that includes best-selling authors, pioneering medical professionals, creative business leaders, and leading inspirational teachers, there’s a class or workshop to suit everyone.

Offerings include workshops in personal growth, mind and body healing, spirituality, creative expression, and professional development. Programs are designed to feed the soul, mind and body, and The Crossings’ serene, yet rugged Hill Country setting is the perfect backdrop. It’s this diversity of spirit that The Crossings – and the Beck’s – want to share with others.

We offer a safe way to open up, an introduction to a lifestyle,” says Ken Beck. “We want to show people a complete holistic view of themselves and support them in that endeavor – no matter what life offers.”

## **Surroundings That Feed the Soul**

That welcoming philosophy permeates The Crossings, and it's no accident that the center's surroundings reflect it. Great care was taken in the selection of the site – a 210-acre expanse of Hill Country landscape located in the Balcones Canyonlands Preserve.

The site includes habitat for the endangered Golden Cheeked Warbler, and all construction was limited to just 34 acres to protect the site and leave the balance of it untouched. The landscaping embraces the same philosophy, so that guests can truly connect with the land and nature. Even outdoor lighting is used only where necessary, as is paving, creating a natural trail system that winds through The Crossings' campus.

One of the most precious places on the campus is the Solidago Retreat. A meditation sanctuary and a place for quiet reflection, its position in a wooded area surrounded by trees is designed for stillness. The Crossings is a nondenominational retreat center that embraces all paths; for that reason, there are stone plaques on the outside wall with hand-carved symbols of the world's religions. Walking through the heavy wooden door into the courtyards, one sees the courtyard on the left that represents the masculine, yang energy and man-made treatments, while the courtyard to the right represents the feminine, yin energy and nature that is as free flowing as it was meant to be.

Even the buildings at The Crossings emanate an elegant simplicity with adobe-like texture and soft colors. The goal of architects Craig Grund and Torn Hatch of Hatch Partnership Architects in Austin was to create an environment where people felt special, surrounded by modest structures that didn't jump out.

“We wanted guests to feel calm and peaceful,” says Hatch. “We used natural materials wherever possible and soft, comforting colors to compose a unified whole. It was a dance.”

Even the driveway to The Crossings was carefully planned to take visitors on a special journey....”The process of getting to the top was meant to be one of discovery,” says Hatch. “By the time you get to the top, you’re more relaxed and feel you’re in a different place right away.”

Those same sensibilities are also reflected in building interiors, including guest lodges, the Live Oak Conference Center, the Beck Welcome Center, the Wellness Center and Spa, and the Cypress Creek Dining Hall, Café and Bookstore. Sybil Case and Janet McCalister of Studio 2 Design in Austin called it “Tex-Zen,” and let the term define the spaces.

We wanted to blend the Texas Hill Country ruggedness with the Zen-like wellness philosophy that The Crossings embraces,” says Case. ”The intention was to feel as if we were minimizing details while using strong colors.”

The designers also used sustainable materials wherever possible, including wood, carpet, tile, stone – even the finishes. Down bedding and natural fibers make bedrooms mini-retreats in themselves and perfectly complement the soft sage greens and blues that dominate the color palette. Reclaimed teak furniture offers comfortable places to sit and relax throughout the campus, usually near water or nature.

The result is relaxing spaces everywhere one looks – from the Beck Welcome Center to the spa to the meeting rooms. The designers also worked with a local art consultant, Sandra Gregor Fine Arts, on an overall art aesthetic that culled from local talent wherever possible.

“This is a special place and has a sense of décor and aesthetic that you don’t find in every retreat center,” says Gregor. “We wanted imagery that was stimulating and calming, that ideally invited the viewer in, to have an emotional or intellectual response to the art. It feeds the soul.”

For more information about Omega at The Crossings, visit [www.omegacrossings.com](http://www.omegacrossings.com) or call toll-free 1-877-944-3003.