



The Record



Staff photos by Rich Kennedy

For 34 years, the Spring Lake Farm has hosted hundreds of area children for summers full of music, dance and drama. Beth Or has hired an architect to design a synagogue for the site and has plans to retain as much open space as possible.

Camp site to become synagogue

The owners of Spring Lake Farm in Upper Dublin will sell the property to Congregation Beth Or of Spring House.

BY BETH LONG
Staff Writer

UPPER DUBLIN — The owners of Spring Lake Farm Art & Music Day Camp have agreed to sell their 16-acre property at Welsh Road and Butler Pike to Reform Congregation Beth Or of Spring House.

Beth Or plans to construct a new synagogue on the site to meet the needs of its growing congregation.

Spring Lake owners James and Margaret C. O'Reilly are planning to retire next year after the camp completes its 35th season.

"We're really proud of what we've established here," James O'Reilly said. "(Closing) will be very sad, although change is inevitable."

The O'Reillys, known to many as "Mr. and Mrs. O.," have lived on the scenic property for nearly 47 years. Both are graduates of Temple Uni-

versity's Tyler School of Art.

About 175 youngsters in kindergarten through 10th grade participate in the day camp during the summer months. Programs focus on music, dance and drama. There are sports programs, as well.

O'Reilly described the camp as a "big family" and said a few of the staff have been there all 34 years. Some of the first campers have sent their own children to Silver Lake.

Selling was a difficult decision, O'Reilly said, but he and his wife feel confident Beth Or will continue the camp's tradition of a love of children, family and community.

Founded 46 years ago, Beth Or moved to a 6-acre property at Penllyn Pike and Dager Road in Lower Gwynedd Township in 1974.

Stu Zeiger, president of the congregation, said it has grown steadily over the years. Current membership includes more than 1,000 house-



James and Margaret O'Reilly have lived on the farm for nearly 47 years. After next summer, they hope to stay in the area and volunteer at different charities.

holds. Beth Or also runs a large religious school and pre-school.

"We're moving primarily because we've outgrown the facility," Zeiger said.

A formal vote by the congregation in June 2000 to authorize a search for a new home was the culmination of more than a year of strategic

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planning.

Zeiger said the idea was to stay close to where Beth Or is now to keep it centrally located for its members. The reaction of the congregation to the Silver Lake purchase was "universally favorable," he said.

"We could not be more tickled with this," Zeiger said. "It's an ideal location for us. We estimate this move will put the synagogue closer to our center of gravity."

As yet, there are no formal plans to suggest what the new facility might look like, but Zeiger said Beth Or has hired an architect. One of the goals is to maintain as much open

space as possible, he added.

Congregation Beth Or has not yet sold its existing facility, but has been in discussions with various potential buyers, said Zeiger. All current operations will continue there until the new facility is complete, which could be two or three years.

James O'Reilly said that after next summer's final camp session, he and his wife plan to stay in the area and would like to begin doing volunteer work for charities.

He declined to give the couple's ages, but said they are "at an age where we're still enjoying life."

He called the eventual end of the camp "bittersweet," then added: "Life will go on, and it will be a good life."