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Summer 2010, Volume 23, #2



Northwest Dharma News

Welcome New Board Members, New Officers

The cycle of NWDA board of directors' terms begins and ends in June each year. At the beginning of the month outgoing, incoming, and in-between board members get together at Bodhi House in Olympia for one of their two yearly face-to-face meetings and welcome newcomers to the sangha.

Joining the board at this time are Ven. Thubten Chonyi of Sravasti Abbey, Newport, WA; Lisa Gardner of Nalandabodhi, Seattle; Ruby Grad of Portland Friends of the Dharma, Portland; Jacqueline Mandell of Samden Ling, Portland; and Tim Tapping of Sakyā Monastery, Seattle.



New NWDA board members, from left, Jacqueline Mandell, Tim Tapping, Ven. Chonyi. Absent from photo are Lisa Gardner and Ruby Grad.



Old and new board members gathered at Bodhi House in Olympia, Washington. Front, left to right: Jacqueline Mandell, Amy Groncznack, Julie Welch, Jeff Kerr, Caterina De Re. Standing: Dick O'Connor, Bill Hirsch, Richard Miles, Nick Vail, Tim Tapping, Ven. Chonyi, Timothy O'Brien (staff), and Clark Hansen/Jampel Gyatso.

Combined with continuing veteran board members Dh. Avichala, Caterina De Re, Bill Hirsch, Jeff Kerr, Richard Miles, Dick O'Connor, and Nick Vail, this is an awesome lineup. Expect exciting things in the near future.

New board officers are Nick Vail, president; Caterina De Re, vice-president; Jeff Kerr, treasurer. Bill Hirsch continues as secretary.

Amy Groncznack, Clark Hansen, and Julie Welch are leaving the board after a collective 10-plus years of service. Amy has been a frequent contributor to and occasional editor of the Northwest Dharma News. Clark served as vice-president and Julie as president of the Association. All three plan to continue to support NWDA in various volunteer capacities.

After the board meeting at Bodhi House, new and old board members plus staffers Timothy O'Brien and David Forsythe gathered for a thoroughly enjoyable dinner celebrating achievements of recent years. Particular generosity was shown to departing president, Julie Welch, who expressed much gratitude for the opportunity to work with such an exceptional group of people.

Totally Volunteer: Staff Changes at NWDA

As of July 1, the Northwest Dharma Association became an all-volunteer organization.

June marks the end of Timothy O'Brien's four-and-a-half year tenure as the single paid staff member of the Northwest Dharma Association. It does not, however, end his activities or connection with NWDA.

"When I began," he says, "I didn't know exactly what was needed. It's really only in looking back that I understand now what has transpired.

"There were lots of issues:

- how to better define and communicate our mission,
- how to create financial sustainability,
- how to continue to produce the Northwest Dharma News, given the increased cost of production, how best to use the tools of recent technology to fulfill our mission,
- how to establish a suitable, manageable set of administrative practices that would address expansion and efficiency,
- how to support the board and membership, so that there would be on-going benefit from our activities.

"We have made progress in all these areas. With the help of many remarkable people over the years, I have been able to play some part in this."

In the short term, NWDA will function as an entirely volunteer organization. There will be a need for paid staff again in the future. It is important that NWDA generate the financial support needed to employ staff to carry out its unique mission. The organization is fortunate, at this time, to have people willing to perform these roles without compensation.

David Forsythe, the Association's long-serving volunteer office manager and webmaster, is the sine qua non of NWDA's day-to-day existence. His work includes checking incoming email daily for inquiries from members and the general public, then answering them or forwarding them to the appropriate person. Also checking daily for submissions to the website calendar; processing and welcoming new group, individual and teacher members; and making revisions to the website group directory.

David picks up mail at the Center House near the office weekly, sends out membership renewal reminders, and processes membership renewals. He maintains the financial records from these and all other transactions, including donations, and keeps up to date with the requirements of various government agencies. As NWDA's use of electronic communication has increased, David has acquired quite a toolkit of internet skills which he uses in creating and maintaining web pages, News archives, databases, and email announcements.

Julie Welch, recently retired board president, will continue as volunteer editor of the Northwest Dharma News and "editor-at-large" of NWDA communications. She will also continue to be involved in event planning and outreach.

As a volunteer, Timothy will continue to supply the board of directors with regular financial statements and various other forms of support, including helping with fundraising and other development projects. He will also assist David in the many administrative and web-related tasks demanding attention.

On Volunteering for the Northwest Dharma Association

Timothy O'Brien:

"The board members and other volunteers (of which I am now happily one myself) exemplify one of the most important practices in the Buddhadharmā: the giving of dana. I have been so inspired by the generosity of these folks! The hours I have spent in the company of these devoted practitioners have benefited me beyond measure.

"The 2010-2011 Board that began its term this June is a remarkable group of people, drawn from diverse lineages. These twelve will move us further ahead. May they and all beings benefit from their deeds!"

David Forsythe:

"Working for NWDA doing office work and website work over many years has become part of my practice. The work that I do is mostly done behind the scenes. It's just the ongoing work that any organization needs and must have. Over the years, it's become second nature to me. I am deeply sympathetic to the mission of NWDA.

"Among the many benefits of doing this work are the people with whom and for whom the work is done. From those who call, email and use the website looking for help finding a sangha, a teacher or just to find out more about Buddhism to the bodhisattvas who give of their talents, it is always an enriching experience. I learn constantly from them.

"Giving can take many forms and is one of the Ten Perfections taught by the Buddha. And it's a value and practice honored by almost all religions. David Steindl-Rast, a Benedictine monk, calls gratitude the heart of prayer. I am grateful for the opportunity to give in this way and happy to do it."

Julie Welch:

"I'm a lucky dog."

Summer 2010 Appeal

We ask for your help twice a year. Almost 40% of our annual revenue comes from your generous donations. This allows us to maintain our website, publish the Northwest Dharma News, and coordinate the various Mahasangha events we sponsor.

As you have read above, NWDA is now an all-volunteer association. Those of us who are already giving our time and money are asking you to join us to foster the work of NWDA. You can donate [here](#).

Where your money goes:

- To the Group Directory that lists all our member group sanghas throughout the NWDA region. The Directory serves people seeking a place to practice and groups offering opportunities to do so.
- To the Calendar of Events, our most used service, offering information about teachers, retreats, and gatherings of all sorts.
- To the Northwest Dharma News, widely read both in the Northwest and far beyond.
- To the support of events like the Prison Dharma and Family Dharma Conferences, the annual Teachers Meeting, and the Annual Gathering that bring together the community as a Mahasangha, transcending the limitations of one group or lineage, and uniting us in our common ideals.

As Buddhism takes root in the West other regional organizations representing the whole of the Buddhist tradition may spring up in other parts of North America. For now, however, the Northwest Dharma Association is a unique experiment. Please help us to continue our groundbreaking work.

Giving is simple on the NWDA secure website. Any amount is deeply appreciated. You can give by simply clicking [here](#).



Message from NWDA President, Nick Vail

The Buddha taught a Dhamma that is good in the beginning, good in the middle and good in the end. - Sāleyyaka Sutta

In the spirit of new beginnings, I write to you with the aspiration that the Dharma flourish in these lands of the Pacific Northwest.

Among non-profit groups, the Northwest Dharma Association is unique. It is our mission to support the Dharma by connecting the diverse sanghas of our region.

This truly is *your* organization. Being composed of individual members and member groups, NWDA exists to be of benefit to your and indeed all beings' path to awakening.

To engage this way in North America, we depend upon your generosity. Your donation will go towards nurturing the Dharma and promoting peace and harmony in a world that is in need.

Please consider giving what you can to help. May all be auspicious!

Sourcebook Listings Free as Benefit of Membership

Sourcebook, NWDA's online directory of Buddhist-friendly businesses and service professionals is now offered free as a benefit of membership in the Northwest Dharma Association.

Sourcebook listings offer the possibility to advertise in the categories of: Professional Services, Psychotherapy & Counseling, Well-Being & Natural Lifestyle, Dharma Supplies, Retreat Centers, and Dining & Lodging.

If you have a business or service and are an individual or teacher member, or a member group, you can place a listing at no additional expense beyond your annual dues. Membership for individuals/teachers remains \$25/year and starts at \$50/year for member groups.

You can place a listing [here](#).

Please spread the word to friends in your sangha or meditation group or to anyone you think might be interested in this offer. This is a great way to reach the Buddhist community throughout and beyond the region while supporting Northwest Dharma at the same time.

Dharma Teachers: Mark Your Calendars for October 2nd

The 2010 Northwest Dharma Association's annual Teachers Meeting will take place as usual on the first Saturday of October. This year that means October 2nd.

The meeting is open to monastics, teachers and sangha leaders of all traditions. You need not be a Northwest Dharma member to attend.

More information about the Teachers Meeting will be available soon. If you would like to receive email updates about the event and/or volunteer to help with planning, please contact us at info@northwestdharma.org.

NWDA Teacher Members can receive information and participate in discussions via the online Teacher Forum. Information about joining as a Teacher Member is here: www.northwestdharma.org.

Welcome New Member Groups

Membership is crucial to the survival of the Northwest Dharma Association. We thank, anonymously, all those who have joined as Individual and Teacher members this year. Listed below are the Dharma Groups who have become members of NWDA since January 2010. We are very grateful for your support!

- Kadak Choku Ling, Bellevue, Washington
- Zen Sangha of Bellevue, Bellevue, Washington
- Recollective Awareness Community of Portland, Portland, Oregon
- Early Morning Zen, Salem, Oregon
- Bodhi Tree, Seattle, Washington
- Lotus Speech of Canada, Sechelt, British Columbia
- Trikaya, Seattle, Washington



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"Compassionate Seattle" Event Honors Global Charter for Compassion

Thanks to the leadership of the Compassionate Action Network (CAN), the Seattle City Council has affirmed the global Charter for Compassion and declared Seattle to be the world's first "Compassionate City".

On April 24, 2010, a unique gathering took place in Seattle, organized by CAN. The day-long event, held at the Center for Spiritual Living, was called Compassionate Seattle and was rich with high points, offering a wealth of keynote speakers, panelists, performers, and non-profits with a rich and varied view of compassion's many forms.

Most significantly, Richard Conlin, Seattle City Council president, was on hand to make the official declaration and preside over Seattle's proclamation of itself as a "compassionate city," a resolution which will provide an action framework for future decision-making and legislation. The entire assembly participated in the reading of the declaration, including these thrilling words:

WHEREAS, we acknowledge our role and responsibility to make compassion a clear, luminous and dynamic force in our city and through our educational efforts and deliberate actions; and WHEREAS, a Compassionate City deepens the quality and the extent to which its citizens embrace compassionate action in caring for its own neighbors; NOW, THEREFORE, be it proclaimed that the Mayor of Seattle and the Seattle City Council affirm the Charter for Compassion, declare Seattle a participant in the Ten Year Campaign for Compassionate Cities, and for the next ten years will establish April and October as compassionate action months in which our citizens, government and institutions work together to embrace and apply compassionate solutions and encourage community service to meet the needs of our families, friends, communities and neighbors.

On hand from her home in England was the brilliant and generous Karen Armstrong, scholar and author in religious studies, recipient of the TED Prize, and founder of the Charter for Compassion.

In her work, Armstrong saw that the Golden Rule—"do unto others as you would have them do unto you" – lies clearly at the heart of all wisdom traditions. (The Dalai Lama calls this "enlightened self-interest.") When support from TED gave her the opportunity to fulfill a wish, Armstrong used it to proclaim compassion as the working basis for getting along in the world.



Karen Armstrong, founder of the Charter for Compassion, offered the keynote address at Compassion Action Network's "Compassionate Seattle" event April 24, 2010.

Says the Charter, in part: "Born of our deep interdependence, compassion is essential to human relationships and to a fulfilled humanity. It is the path to enlightenment, and indispensable to the creation of a just economy and a peaceful global community."

Other keynote speakers included Courtney Martin, writer, teacher and co-founder of the Secret Society for Creative Philanthropy, who moderated the panel on "Compassion in Business, Institutions and Society," and James O'Dea, a Fellow of the Institute of Noetic Sciences and former director of the Washington Office of Amnesty International, who presided over "Thriving Communities and Caring for the Earth."

It was a day marked by generosity. The Center for Spiritual Living donated the space. A legion of volunteers provided services, helping with set-up, media, registration, event flow, you name it. The organizing committee contributed long hours over many months. The effort was spearheaded by Jon Ramer, Executive Director of CAN, and Emily Hine, social entrepreneur and Senior Director of Seeds of Compassion. Rev. Guo Cheen and others played key leadership roles. CAN is an offspring of the Seeds of Compassion organization that brought His Holiness the Dalai Lama to Seattle in April 2008.

Both Jon and Emily agree that the most important aspect of the day was the launch of the ten-year campaign to make Seattle a compassionate city in accord with the principles of the Charter. "The joint proclamation with the city is highly relevant as it sets the tone for larger policy conversations that will impact our community over the next decade," says Emily.

According to Jon, "The entire process demonstrated that we are capable of making something happen and seeing the results of our collective efforts...Organizing the event itself was very much a spiritual practice. We often let go of expectations and assumptions, recognizing that whatever was going to happen was the only thing that could happen."

Emily, herself a Dharma practitioner, feels that Buddhists have a big role to play in the compassion movement. "We can't really be aware of our impact on others unless we are aware of our own actions. Since meditation and mindfulness are a large part of Buddhist practice along with doing no harm and so many other virtues, the connection and contribution to the compassion movement is pretty clear to me. Not to mention the leadership of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, or the partnership between Buddhist meditators and neuroscientists that is definitely helping our western culture get the 'proof' needed to support the practices of mindfulness and compassion."

Perhaps the best thing about the Compassionate Seattle event was the all-pervasive sense of happiness and joy, expressed in so many ways – the glowing energy of the emcees, the warmth and wit of Karen Armstrong, the playful camaraderie of the Interfaith Amigos (Pastor Don Mackenzie, Rabbi Ted Falcon, Sheikh Jamal Rahman), and the splendid performances that capped the day. After his short delay getting to the stage, the crowd laughed when actor Gbenga Akinagbe said he had gotten a bit confused "being from New York and not used to so many open, kind people." Later, many people cried when Playback Theater powerfully re-told the story of a man who had lost his child, reminding us all of our shared vulnerability and tender hearts. And my personal favorite brought delight to many: the Mt. Zion Baptist Church Liturgical Dancers performing to a piece of music that wove together the mantra *Om Mani Padme Hum* and the hymn *Amazing Grace*.

As His Holiness the Dalai Lama says, "Developing a kind heart... is for everyone who considers himself or herself to be a member of the human family, and thus sees things in accordingly large terms." Creating a truly compassionate Seattle is a big vision. We need grace, blessing, some old-fashioned luck and a lot of elbow grease. Come be a part of it, please.

[NEXT MAHASANGHA ARTICLE >](#)

For more information about the Compassionate Action Network, please visit:
www.compassionateactionnetwork.com.
You can sign the Charter for Compassion at:
www.charterforcompassion.org.

Contributor: Connie Moffit.
Photo: Courtesy of Compassionate Action Network.



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Spokane Collaboration Creates "Friends of Compassion"

Led by members of Downtown Rotary Club 21 of Spokane, Washington, and Sravasti Abbey of Newport, a diverse cross-section of the Spokane community has spent the last several months preparing an invitation to His Holiness the Dalai Lama to visit their city for three days of teachings and events. Ven. Thubten Chodron, Sravasti's Abbess, hand-delivered the invitation to His Holiness when he visited New York in late May.

Though the sponsors have recently learned that His Holiness is unable to accept the invitation at this time, enthusiasm remains undiminished for a proposed two-year plan to explore ways of applying the values of kindness and compassion in community life. Spearheaded by John Hancock, Project Chair for Downtown Rotary 21, in collaboration with Sravasti Abbey, the project will go forth under the name "Friends of Compassion".

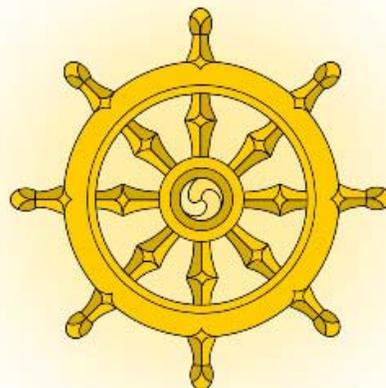
Local business leaders, people of diverse faiths, members of city government, social service providers, educators, and others participated in the earlier discussions. Though they brought different vocabularies and experience to the conversation, they have found they share similar ideals and common goals.

The broad objective of "Friends of Compassion" will be to meet local needs and enhance community life through compassionate action. According to Hancock, the central question to be addressed is, "How can institutions, not just persons, act compassionately?"

The combination of Rotarians and Tibetan Buddhist nuns isn't one that readily springs to mind. Rotary Club 21 became acquainted with Ven. Chodron when a Rotary member, having read of her work with prison inmates in Washington State and elsewhere, suggested the group invite her to speak at one of their regular meetings. After addressing the commonalities of the Buddhist 8-Fold Path and the Rotarian 4-Way Test, she received a standing ovation.

Rotary Club 21 has made a grant to Sravasti Abbey to help distribute videotapes of Ven. Chodron's teachings to prisons throughout the United States. The grant enabled the Abbey to purchase duplicating equipment.

According to the recently launched "Friends of Compassion" website (www.friendsofcompassion.com) Spokane's Rotary Club 21 is one of the largest worldwide, with about 350 members. Founded in 1910, its mission is to promote "Service Above Self".



< PREVIOUS MAHASANGHA ARTICLE

For more information about Rotary Club 21, please visit:
www.rotaryspokane.com.

To learn more about Sravasti Abbey, see
www.sravastiabbey.org.

Information about "Friends of Compassion" c/o John Hancock, Project Chair
Downtown Rotary 21, (509)244-8559 and
www.friendsofcompassion.com.

Contributor: Julie Welch.
Graphics: Courtesy of Rotary International and Wikipedia.



Buddhism & Sustainability: A Conference on Buddhist Ecology

Understanding and framing a spiritual response to the ecological challenges we face now and in the future was the focus of Seattle University's weekend-long conference entitled "Eco-Sangha: Buddhism and Sustainability". Two years in the planning, the conference brought together speakers from the fields of philosophy, religion, science, art, and hands-on sustainable farming.

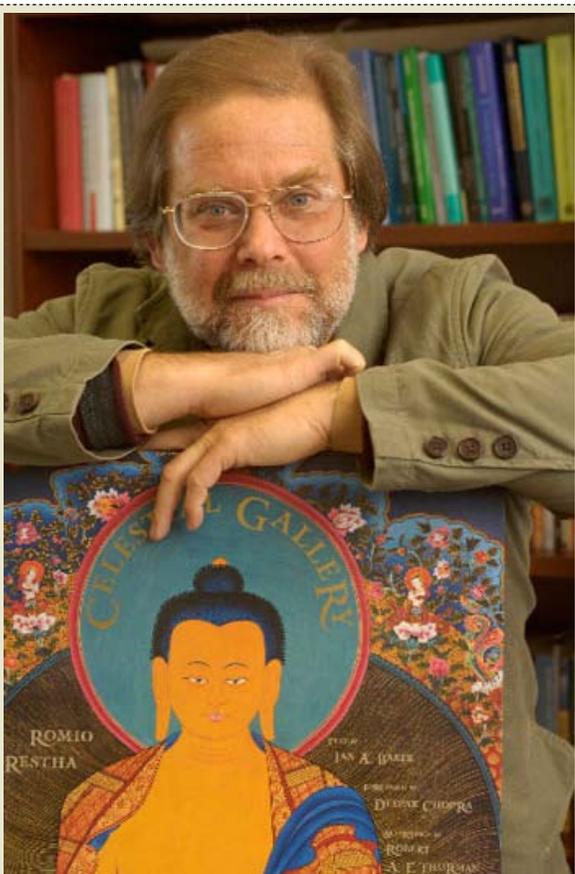
Introducing the concept of "eco-sangha" was Rev. Don Castro of Seattle Betsuin Buddhist Temple. Castro offered an earth-centered interpretation of the Four Noble Truths, explaining that the suffering we confront—and need to recognize—is that of the entire planet and its beings. The causes of that suffering are profound and complex, arising from our deep interconnectedness. The path we must take to "cure" the earth's suffering requires a "new asceticism" practiced in full awareness of our interconnections. "To be a Buddhist," Castro asserts, "is automatically to be an ecologist and a conservationist."

Dr. David Loy, professor of Religion and Ethics at Xavier University and author of *Money, Sex, War, Karma: Notes for a Buddhist Revolution*, posed the question, "Does Buddhism offer any special approach to the ecological crisis?"

A Zen practitioner, Loy suggested that there are profound parallels between our individual predicament, as Buddhism understands it, and our collective situation today in relation to the earth. Our un-awakened misunderstanding of "self" and the suffering that arises from a false sense of duality "hold true for our biggest collective sense of self: the duality between us as a species, *Homo sapiens sapiens*, and the rest of the biosphere." Repairing the rupture between humans and the earth entails awakening fully to their non-duality. If we are able to do so, humanity can become "the collective bodhisattva of the biosphere".



Dr. Vishaka Smith, one of the presenters at Seattle University's Eco-Sangha: Buddhism & Sustainability Conference, spoke on environmental and personal ethics from a Buddhist perspective.



Dr. David Loy, professor of Religion and Ethics at Xavier University and author of *Money, Sex, War, Karma: Notes for a Buddhist Revolution*.

"Climate Change: A Karmic Revolution" was the topic of a presentation by Dr. Mark Unno, of the University of Oregon Department of Religious Studies. Rejecting the two extremes of "fight or flight" which characterize most responses to our current environmental challenge, and acknowledging that our usual problem-solving methods may be insufficient to deal with the scope of climate change, Unno proposed a Buddhist understanding that is both activist and transcendent, with karmic awareness at its fulcrum.

"On the one hand, we must do whatever we can on the stage of history, large or small. This includes everything from recycling efforts to the development of whole new 'green' sectors of public and private enterprise. On the other, we live in the humble awareness that all of our efforts may not be able to save life as we know it."

Other presenters included Dr. Vishaka Smith, an environmental engineer and Theravadan Buddhist, and the Reverend Kosho Itagaki of the Northwest Zen Community. Smith spoke on Buddhism's five basic precepts as the basis for living a non-harmful life. Rev. Itagaki offered an approach to ecology from a Soto Zen perspective, focusing on Dogen's understanding of harmony with nature.

Dr. Saheed Adejumobi, Global African Studies, Seattle University, spoke on "Power Relations and the Ecologies of Freedom", locating the dignity of labor in its relationship to the earth, time and history.

Many in the audience were moved by Naomi Kasumi's artist's talk about her work of the last nine years, which deals her with grief and loss over an aborted fetus. Kasumi is on the faculty of Seattle University's Department of Fine Arts.

Margaret Pikarsky of Bee Heaven Farm, Florida, concluded the conference with a farmer-activist's view of community supported agriculture and the challenges of operating an organic farm in the fragile south Florida ecosystem.

Seattle University philosophy professors Jason Wirth and Elizabeth Sikes, plus religion professor Sharon Suh and Eco-Sangha Seattle co-founder Bill Hirsch, were organizers of the conference.

[NEXT GREEN DHARMA ARTICLE >](#)

For more information about Eco-Sangha Seattle, please visit: www.ecosangha.com.

Contributors: Bill Hirsch, Julie Welch.
Photos: Courtesy of Compassion Action Network,
Wisdom Publications.



Seattle Buddhist Peace Fellowship Hosts a Conversation with David Loy

On an atypically warm day in May, twenty people gathered at a home in Seattle's Central District for a conversation with David Loy, Dharma teacher, Buddhist scholar and author. Loy's recent book *Money, Sex, War, Karma: Notes for a Buddhist Revolution* explores societal manifestations of the Buddhist three poisons: greed, hatred, and delusion. He was in Seattle to speak at the Eco-Sangha Conference at Seattle University. (See related article: [Buddhism & Sustainability: A Conference on Buddhist Ecology](#).)

While in town, he took time to meet with Buddhist Peace Fellowship members and friends and discuss the subject of economics from a Buddhist perspective. Seattle's chapter of BPF has hosted similar small gatherings with engaged Buddhists and special friends in the past.

Loy's past and present scholarship has focused on aspects of engaged practice, which makes him ideally suited to discuss the relevance of the Buddha's early teachings and their application to current global economic crises and what follows. With the magnitude of the disaster in the Gulf of Mexico starting to seep in, most present seemed to view the U.S. economic collapse as one of many catalysts for reevaluating our personal and collective economic lives.

Economics as a term was viewed broadly by Loy and many present as comprising the common and academic concepts but also, and more fundamentally, relational dynamics and connections between humans and the planet, growth-based economy and sustainability, exploitation and being exploited, and the like. We pondered the much more personal question: what do we really need and at what cost to the earth and all people and beings on it?

Loy sees economics as deeply rooted in the Dharma as the Buddha lived it but also as requiring a contemporary Dharmic understanding informed by awareness of current forms of corporate power, consumerism and media that stimulate grasping and normalize violence in the service of acquisition. The framework and analysis in *Money, Sex, War, Karma* helps clarify how greed, ill will and delusion have morphed into powerful sociopolitical systems that perpetuate these "poisons" on a national scale and far beyond.

The seeds of this contemporary understanding of Dharma and practice are in the early teachings on the causes of suffering and its cessation. We discussed implications for our Buddhist or other spiritual practice. Loy and others spoke of compassionate engagement beginning on the cushion and in our daily lives and consumption patterns. Our interconnectedness also necessitates practicing this engagement in all our close relationships, from those with loved ones and those we have as citizens, to those that stretch across continents and to all beings.

Seattle Buddhist Peace Fellowship plans to organize a symposium on Buddhism and Economics in mid 2011. To keep abreast of information regarding this event or to take part in planning, contact BPF through David Berrian at 425-482-3026 or dberrian@earthlink.net.



Dr. David Loy, professor of Religion and Ethics at Xavier University and author of *Money, Sex, War, Karma: Notes for a Buddhist Revolution*.

[< PREVIOUS GREEN DHARMA ARTICLE](#)

For more information about Buddhist Peace Fellowship, please visit: www.bpf.org. Information about BPF Seattle can be found at: www.bpf-seattle.org.

Contributor: Elaine Rose.
Photo: Bill Aal.



Resistance and Surrender: Prison Dharma Conference 2010

The Northwest's 3rd annual Prison Dharma Conference took place the weekend of June 4-6 at the Portland Insight Meditation Center. The event is an opportunity for people who lead meditation or dharma groups in prison to network with each other, learn about what's going on in other areas, and share ideas and practices. Co-sponsored by Plum Mountain Buddhist Community and the Northwest Dharma Association, this year's gathering offered information about prison volunteers themselves, as well as insight into the boundaries, differences, and commonalities among people inside and out.

Conference organizer Kobai Scott Whitney, spiritual director of Plum Mountain and author of *Sitting Inside: Buddhist Practice in American Prisons*, started off the conference with a Friday evening presentation on "Compassion and the Passions in Prisons". He stressed the importance of maintaining skillful boundaries with inmates, a process of negotiation that involves being aware of sexual energy in the prison environment. His talk included advice on how to avoid common mistakes that some volunteers make.

In his talk entitled "Resistance by Other Means", Paul McIvor, M.A., a Toronto-based prison volunteer and researcher, presented the results of his master's thesis study on Buddhist prison volunteers in the United States. He found that in the sample he interviewed the majority of volunteers had practiced 20 years or more, more than half in a Japanese Zen tradition, and held leadership roles in their sanghas. In contrast to the American prison population, they were likely to be white and educated, and 50% were female.

They tended to cluster in either the 30's or over-50's age groups and many had been involved in some kind of social or political action (e.g. civil disobedience) in either the 1960's or '70's, or the late 1990's-2000's, depending on their cohort. Though 20% declined to answer, the remainder of those sampled tended to classify themselves politically as "left" or even "far left".

Many volunteers felt that doing prison dharma work enhanced their own Buddhist practice, citing exposure to inmates' questions and their ways of responding to prison life as valuable rewards for volunteering. Another motivator was the opportunity to "witness a transformation" in inmates who undertake dharma practice.

McIvor hypothesizes that in addition to acting out of simple altruism and/or benefiting from a reciprocally valuable relationship to dharma practice with inmates, Buddhist prison volunteers are, to greater or lesser extent, engaged in resistance to authoritarianism and oppression as represented by the prison system. This Buddhist approach to dissent sidesteps the oppositional model of the dominant culture, thus offering "resistance by other means".



Paul McIvor, who participates in meditation groups in Canada's largest prison near Toronto, offered results of his study of Buddhist prison volunteers.



Doug Waddington, left, Superintendent of Washington Correctional Center, and Kevin Griffin, Dharma teacher and author, visited the Portland Buddhist Festival in Colonel Summer's Park.

Later Saturday morning Ven. Thubten Tarpa of Sravasti Abbey and Genko Rainwater of Dharma Rain Zen Center spoke and answered questions about their experiences in Washington and Oregon prisons. A topic of particular interest was whether or not incarcerated practitioners should be encouraged, or even required, to disclose the crime for which they were sentenced.

Ven. Tarpa stressed the value of helping people distinguish remorse or regret from guilt. While remorse concerns a specific action that took place in the past, which one wishes to overcome and not repeat, guilt is more self-centered and involves feeling bad about oneself. Buddhist psychology teaches that remorse is useful and valuable, but guilt is less so. Prisoners are encouraged to clearly see harmful actions and express remorse but not to wallow in guilt. She demonstrated a chanting practice used to separate remorse from guilt.

The conference's afternoon speaker was Kevin Griffin, author of *One Breath at a Time: Buddhism and the 12 Steps* and *A Burning Desire: Dharma, God and the Path of Recovery*. (In conjunction with the conference Griffin also gave a public reading in the evening. See related article: [Higher Power: Buddhists, "God", & the 12 Steps](#). A practitioner and teacher of insight meditation in the Bay Area and himself a recovering alcoholic, Griffin applied the model of recovery from addiction to the broader effort to transcend suffering in general, whether experienced by those inside prison or out.

"Being present," he said, "is the hardest thing to teach people who are in the midst of suffering and looking to get out." Transformation begins by making a commitment to respond to the present moment and then undertaking to live a moral life. This is the essence of what in 12 Step programs is known as "surrender".

In a follow-up discussion Doug Waddington, Superintendent of Washington Correctional Center (WCC) in Shelton, commented that "surrender" is not an intuitive response, especially for the prison inmates he supervises. He and others talked about how difficult it is in the prison environment to express kindness and compassion without becoming, or fearing to become, vulnerable. A workshop held at WCC helped inmates learn how to write letters of gratitude in preparation for an event, "Honoring Significant Women". They also had the option to take waltz lessons. A string quartet played at the celebration.

On Sunday morning, the last day of the conference, the format was more casual. The group had time to discuss issues in a more freeform way and talk about some of the politics around prisons and sex offenders in particular. The conference concluded with a circle of metta. Participants each rang a gong and offered lovingkindness to the many different people affected by the prison system and oppression in general.

General information on this subject can be found on the Prison Dharma Network site: www.prisondharmanetwork.org.

For more information about Plum Mountain Buddhist Community, please visit: www.plummountain.org.

Contributors: Jeff Kerr, Julie Welch.
Photos: Lenny Reed.



Higher Power: Buddhists, "God", & the 12 Steps

In his book *As Bill Sees It*, Bill Wilson, the co-founder of Alcoholics Anonymous, writes:

While A.A. has restored thousands of poor Christians to their churches, and has made believers out of atheists and agnostics, it has also made good A.A.'s out of those belonging to the Buddhist, Islamic and Jewish faiths. For example, we question very much whether our Buddhist members in Japan would ever have joined this society had A.A. officially stamped itself a strictly Christian movement.

You can easily convince yourself of this by imagining that A.A. started among the Buddhists and that they told you couldn't join them unless you became a Buddhist, too. If you were a Christian alcoholic under these circumstances, you might well turn your face to the wall and die. (*As Bill Sees It*, p. 34.)

As Kevin Griffin explains in his two books, *One Breath at a Time* and *A Burning Desire*, there is no cause to "turn your face to the wall and die."

When I first entered A.A. in 1975 I was a decided Christian. Years later, I fell victim to the obsession to drink like a normal person, failed to do so and reentered A.A. as a Buddhist in 2001. In returning to A.A. I had some questions about how my need for A.A. would fit into my Buddhist practice. Perhaps the most significant difference between Buddhism and Christianity is the absence of a God in the former and the presence of a God in the latter. In the A.A. 12 Steps the word "God" appears four times and is referred to four other times.

Speaking in conjunction with the Prison Dharma Conference held in Portland June 4-6 (see article this issue, [Prison Dharma Conference 2010](#)), Griffin addressed this major distinction between Buddhist and Christian language with comments and also readings from his new book, *A Burning Desire*. He suggested that in place of "God" Buddhists might insert "Dharma." During the discussion that followed, one member of the audience stated that if Dharma were the only alternative to "God" perhaps it was better that A.A. started in the West, as western Christians might be reluctant to join a society that was so Buddhist-based.

Griffin noted that Bill Wilson once showed the 12 Steps to a Thai Buddhist monk, who thought the steps were quite positive but suggested that in place of "God" Buddhists might use the word "good". Indeed, the A.A. approach has long included the qualifier of "God as we understand him," greatly expanding the notion of a higher power. A.A. literature mentions alternatives to the Christian and Jewish notions of God, such as the A.A. group itself. Individual groups vary a great deal in their composition, so much so that there are A.A. groups for atheists and agnostics.

Griffin went on to describe other differences in culture between East and West. While it is common in the West for an alcoholic to stand before a group and say, "My name is Eddie and I am an alcoholic," such an admission in the East would be contrary to the norm. No doubt the distinction that got the biggest laugh was Griffin's assertion that while 12 Step programs in the West are frequently referred to as "self help" in the East they might be described as "no-self help"!

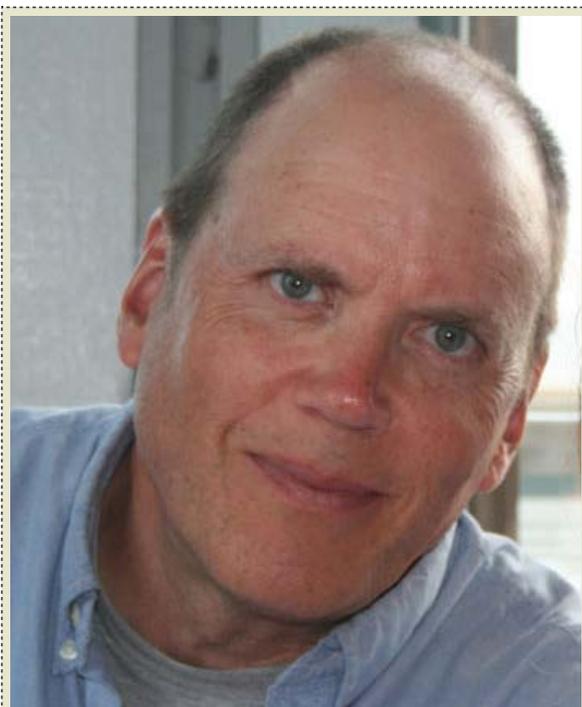
Griffin's major contribution is not his distinctions between East and West, Buddhism and Christianity, but the many points of convergence between Dharma and the 12 Steps. In his book *One Breath at a Time*, he masterfully works through the 12 Steps and ties their contents to the Dharma. As a result he illuminates and strengthens both, resulting in a potent antidote to our disease.

For me it was fascinating that Griffin, like me, at first thought the power of his Dharma practice alone would be sufficient to mitigate his alcoholism. But it wasn't for him and it wasn't for me. However, when brought together they not only keep the alcoholic demons at bay, they also produce a life of serenity and happiness. The book *Alcoholics Anonymous* mentions that a spiritual way of life is not a theory, it is something we must practice.

To illustrate Griffin's mastery of the 12 Steps and Dharma, I will quote from his *One Breath at a Time* regarding Step 6: "[We] Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character."

Step Six brings us to the central issue of sobriety and all spiritual growth: letting go. This is how the Buddha said we would find happiness; he talked of many forms of attachment and the necessity of letting go of each of them: attachment to material things and sense pleasure; attachment to views and opinions; attachments to relationships; attachment to your body, your thoughts, your sense of identity. (p. 137)

Those of us who suffer from addiction and who are Buddhists will benefit from reading Kevin Griffin's works. Also, those non-Buddhists who are addicts or alcoholics and are searching for a spiritual path will find an excellent guide in Kevin's writings. He has provided a great benefit to those of us still suffering.



Kevin Griffin, author of *One Breath at a Time* and *A Burning Desire*.

Contributor: "Eddie Peavey".
Photo: Courtesy of Hay House.



Northwest Dharma News

Bringing the Path Back Home: Residential Zen Center Planned for Seattle

Bringing Zen training and practice into daily life is the vision for a unique new residential center tentatively slated to open in September 2012 in Seattle's North Beacon Hill neighborhood.

Dai Bai Zan Cho Bo Zen Ji—or “The Listening to the Dharma Zen Temple on Great Plum Mountain”—is remodeling an apartment building at 1727 South Horton Street based on a co-housing model. Adults who want to step up their practice without entering a monastery will find a supportive environment with a balance of privacy and community. Residents will have their own apartments but also share in meals, chores, and formal practice such as chanting and walking meditation.

"Being able to offer affordable housing for people who want to train but who still need to hold down a job" is key, says Chobo-Ji Abbot Genjo Marinello Osho. He likens monastic life to graduate school, quipping, "it's good to do it when you're young." While the Zen path often leads to the monastery, Genjo Osho notes that it comes full circle, requiring that one bring the gifts of training back into family and society. "It's bringing the path back home," he says.

As a part of that path, residents will share their learning with non-resident members of Chobo-Ji and the larger community, teaching classes in basic Buddhism and Zen arts such as flower arranging, poetry, and calligraphy. A guest program might even come to fruition, providing opportunities for people from outside the local community to stay and practice at the center. If that happens, the long-term residents would help to organize and run the program.

The center—a block-long brick affair at 1727 South Horton Street—was built in the 1920's and overlooks a quiet, tree-lined street. Behind it, a generous yard will eventually be transformed into a Zen garden. The daylight basement will become a zendo (meditation hall) accommodating forty people, with an adjacent kitchen, multipurpose room, and bathrooms.

Above, Chobo-Ji now occupies two of eight apartments, and will take over the rest mostly through attrition of the current residents. Chobo-Ji has helped some of the residents transition to new housing, as the intention is not to displace anyone. In addition, Genjo Osho has already "knocked on every door within a two-block radius" to introduce himself and the center. The neighborhood's response has been overwhelmingly positive.

Several different changes provided the impetus behind the project. The Chobo-Ji sangha has outgrown its current space on Capitol Hill, and members want more training options. In addition, Genjo Osho's focus as a teacher shifted two years ago, when he became a dharma heir in the Rinzaï - Hakuin Ekaku Zenji lineage. This qualified him to propagate the lineage, which he describes as a mandate to "requite" or "gift back" the training he has received.

Chobo-Ji has raised funds for the project and will sell its current property to pay off the loans for the new center. Remodeling efforts should begin in late fall or early winter of this year.

For more information about Dai Bai Zan Cho Bo Zen Ji, please visit:
www.choboji.org.



Bringing Zen training and practice into daily life is the vision for a unique new residential center tentatively slated to open in September 2012 in Seattle's North Beacon Hill neighborhood.

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Contributor: Amy Groncznack.
Photo: Courtesy of Dai Bai Zan Cho Bo Zen Ji.



Northwest Dharma News

H.H. the Dalai Lama to Visit Garden of 1000 Buddhas in 2011

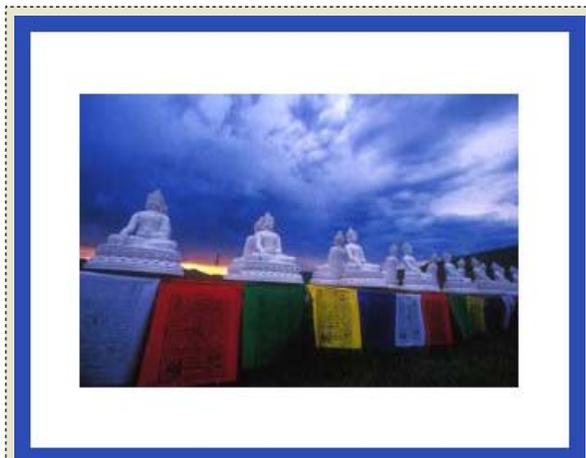
Located within the Confederated Tribes of the Salish and Kootenai reservation, north of the small town of Arlee, the Garden of 1000 Buddhas began as the vision of Gochen Tulku Sang-ngag Rinpoche, spiritual director of Ewam Sang-ngag Ling.

Designed to reflect the circular shape and eight-fold spokes of a Dharma Wheel, the garden features a 25' central statue of Yum Chenmo (Prajnaparamita), Great Mother of perfect wisdom, surrounded by a circle of 1000 cast concrete Buddhas. Another 1000 stupas bearing images of the female Buddha Tara will form an outer circle around these.

The casting is done by hand on site and, more recently, at Ewam Montana's "Buddha Barn" in Missoula. More than half the Buddha statues have been completed but the rest, plus the stupas, the lighting and electrical work, and the landscaping are still in the works. Much of the work is done by volunteers and efforts to raise approximately \$1 million to complete the project are ongoing.

When completed, the Garden of 1000 Buddhas will be a major international pilgrimage site. According to Tulku Sang-ngag Rinpoche, the purpose of the garden is "to bring about positive transformation within those who visit, in response to the negativity that abounds in the world today."

For more information about the Garden of 1000 Buddhas, please visit: www.ewambuddhagarden.org. Information about Ewam International is at: www.ewam.org.



His Holiness the Dalai Lama has accepted an invitation to visit western Montana in late 2011, where he will consecrate Ewam Sang-Ngag Ling's Garden of 1000 Buddhas.

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*Contributor: Julie Welch.
Photo: Courtesy of Ewam Sang-Ngag Ling.*



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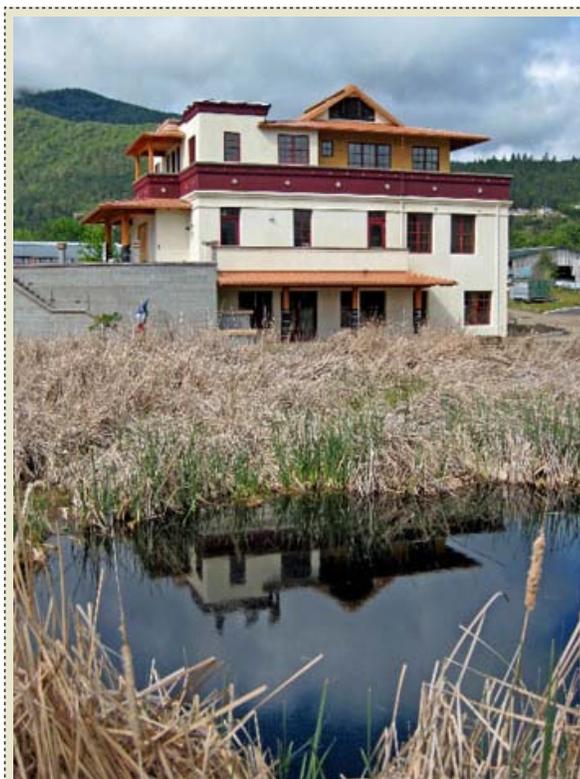
Inner and Outer Beauty at Kagyu Sukha Chöling

A culmination of faith, determination and cooperation by a community of Buddhists and non-Buddhists has transformed a vision into reality. Kagyu Sukha Chöling, a center for the practice and study of Tibetan Buddhism now has a permanent home in Ashland, Oregon. Dedicated to supporting individuals at any stage of their spiritual journey, the KSC Tibetan Buddhist Center opened in June 2010.

When Lama Pema Clark and Lama Yeshe Parke came to Ashland in 2000 at the request of their teacher, Venerable Lama Lodru Rinpoche, they had no idea what awaited them. First meeting in private homes, then in a leased house, it soon became apparent that even the house was too small to meet the needs of their rapidly growing group. In retrospect, one might say their destiny was catching up with them sooner than later.

The search for a more appropriate location led the sangha through an extended process, exploring options of renting vs. building. Ultimately the desire for more adequate space escalated the group into property owners with building approval for an authentic Tibetan Buddhist Center.

Two aspects of the project are of great significance. In keeping with the Buddhist philosophy of living in harmony with the earth, the building was planned to be environmentally sustainable. The project was a community effort by local architects, contractors, suppliers and laborers with volunteers playing a major role. Ultimately, 100 men, women and children donated many hours to perform a vast array of services, saving close to \$200,000 in building costs.



Kagyu Sukha Chöling's newly completed Meditation Center in Ashland, Oregon. Wetland and wildlife pond are in foreground. Main entry to the building is at left. [CLICK ON IMAGE TO VIEW PHOTO GALLERY](#)

Carlos Delgado, architect, explains that the design of the 6000 sq. ft. structure is a fairly simple passive building—a pioneering, mixed-use structure, utilizing green and sustainable architecture and construction. Passive heating and cooling methods rely on occupants' modulation of systems; advanced framing techniques save wood and provide more insulation space; energy-efficient lighting, solar hot water with maximum energy-efficient appliances all conserve water and electricity. As an added touch of beauty, regionally adapted plants are featured in a low-water-use landscape and contemplative garden adjacent to nearby wetlands.

Clay Colley, semi-retired building contractor and sangha member, coordinated and supervised the volunteers, whose efforts began in earnest after the general contractor completed the bulk of the structure. He explains that a local man donated trees from his property that he had cut and dried to be milled for use in all the beams and posts.

"I've had the satisfaction of teaching people with few building skills to prepare and paint the inside and outside of the building, finish the concrete floors and stain all woodwork, including boards and beams. Countless hours with huge savings. Volunteers also have been key in the massive amount of cleanup, separating plastic, paper, wood and concrete—striving to recycle or reuse everything."

Clay concludes, "Everyone wants to have their hands on this building. Our connection to our teachers and to the center has become so enriched by this experience. It's been an opportunity to practice our intentions. Putting our efforts into this building has come back a thousand times."

Other volunteers support these sentiments, mentioning the camaraderie that has developed among the volunteers of all ages, the excitement and joy they feel to be part of the vision, whether or not they are Buddhists. According to one retiree, "In this third chapter of my life I want to be in service to causes that are ethical. This community feels like home." Another man who appeared out of the blue, offering to lay 7 1/2 tons of stone, explains his contribution of time and skill, "When I finally understood my purpose and started giving away my gifts, everything came back to me."

Nevertheless, this creation of a beautiful and unique home for peaceful and compassionate practice remains secondary to the teachings and activities that have also grown. Monthly Sunday meditations are open to all, alternating *Tonglen*, *Calm Abiding* and *Silent Sit*. *Calm Abiding* is also offered on some weekday evenings. Other Tibetan style meditations such as *Chenrezig*, *Mahakala*, *Green Tara* and *Four Tantric Deities* occur regularly, with practice support groups provided as well. Two weekly classes with varied topics occur in fall, winter and spring as well as day-long retreats on site along with three and seven day retreats off site. Special events bring visiting Lamas to the community, with visitor quarters now available in the new building.

DharmaKids, a group of children ages 5-12, meets twice monthly to learn mindfulness and compassion, the basic tenets of Buddhism, through stories, meditation, exercises and games. A pre-teen group is planned for the fall and eventually a teen group will be added.

Kagyu Sukha Chöling Meditation Center welcomes all who seek a path of peace and a life imbued with kindness and compassion. The doors are now open for all to enter.

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For more information about Kagyu Sukha Chöling and about construction details, see www.kscashland.org or email ksc@mind.net. The center's address is 109 Clear Creek Drive, Ashland, OR 97520. Tel: 541-552-1769.

Contributor: Jody Woodruff.
Photos: Courtesy of Kagyu Sukha Chöling and Nance Louise.

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