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Cover Photo: Gretchen Graber.

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## Northwest Dharma News

### Message from NWDA President, Dick O'Connor

On Sunday June 19th the Northwest Dharma Association Board of Directors met in person at Bodhi House in Olympia, Washington.

There were several tasks to be accomplished. The first was to welcome the new board members elected this past spring. These are Joe Pearl of Seattle and Thich Minh Tinh of Trout Lake Abbey in Trout Lake, Washington. Each will serve a three-year term.

The second was to elect the officers for the coming year. Dick O'Connor was elected President and Richard Miles as Vice President. Jeff Kerr and Bill Hirsch will continue to serve as Treasurer and Secretary, respectively. The term of office for all four positions is one year.

A major topic of discussion was finding replacements for David Forsythe as volunteer Office Manager and Julie Welch as volunteer News Editor. The Board decided to hire Timothy O'Brien, at a nominal salary, to replace David at the end of July. Julie will continue to volunteer as News Editor till the end of the year. The new News Editor will receive a stipend beginning in 2012.

All of the NWDA Board members are committed to serving the larger Buddhist community. We currently do so primarily by publishing the NW Dharma News, maintaining our online Group Directory and Calendar of Events, and sponsoring conferences throughout the Northwest. Another major task, ongoing, is to take a thorough look at the Northwest Dharma Association as an organization and decide on its future course.

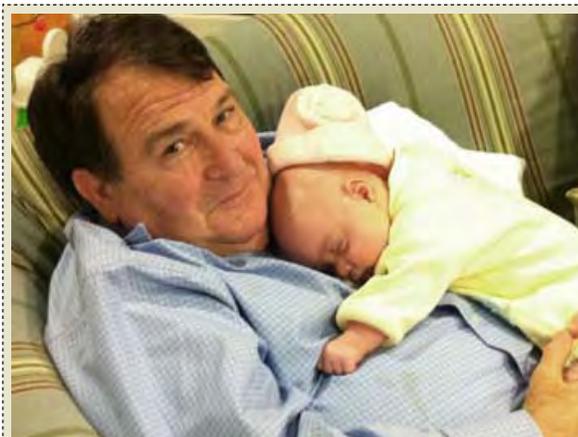
Guiding us along the way will be two of Peter Drucker's books, *Managing the Non-Profit Organization* and *The Five Most Important Questions You Will Ever Ask About Your Organization*. This work will continue through the next face-to-face board meeting in October. At that time we will publish the conclusions of the Board.

At our recent meeting we estimated that about 10% of the thousand or so Buddhist groups in the Northwest are NWDA members. It does not bother me if we stay at a 10% level as long as we are providing valued services to our members. I strongly encourage readers to let us know your thoughts. As the Northwest Dharma Association plans its future, it is imperative that we secure information from both our group and individual members about why they joined and why they continue to support us. Equally important, NWDA needs to get information from non-members about why they are not members.

You can contact us at [info@northwestdharma.org](mailto:info@northwestdharma.org). For our part, we will keep you apprised of what people are telling us.

The financial condition of the NWDA is good, despite a downturn in the economy and a downturn in contributions. This state of affairs is due to the work of volunteers Timothy O'Brien, Julie Welch and David Forsythe who have donated their time this past year without compensation. Without their commitments, NWDA would not have survived.

Finally, I'd like to thank Nick Vail for his work as NWDA president this past year. He has been a model president who is inclusive, sensitive, thoughtful and totally dedicated to the Dharma. I personally am grateful for his example. He has taught me much and I hope to apply all of it in the coming year as his successor...



Northwest Dharma Association President Dick O'Connor with granddaughter Isabella.

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## Northwest Dharma News

### Fond Farewell to David Forsythe

After nearly two decades of unstinting dedication to the Northwest Dharma Association in one after another critical capacity, David Forsythe has announced his retirement from service at the end of July.

Over these many years David has served multiple terms on the NWDA Board of Directors, as President of the Board, and as the organization's so-called "Office Manager", a title which doesn't begin to suggest the range and importance of duties David currently undertakes. Among NWDA veterans David is simply known as "the heart of the Association".

At one point in NWDA's nearly forgotten past, during a difficult transition for the organization, David found himself "the last man standing."

"There was no one else," he's been heard to say. "I was it."

David was one of the Gang of Three present at the now legendary "Phnom Penh Noodle House meeting" in Seattle where, with George Draffan and Steve Wilhelm, he committed himself to bringing the moribund Association back to life.

A long-serving NWDA Board member, former President, and volunteer staff-person himself, George Draffan relates:

"I remember the day I met David. As a newcomer to Seattle, he had come into the NWDA office to help stick labels on envelopes. I was impressed with his quiet helpfulness, his positive regard for the work of NWDA, and his faith that what we were doing was worthwhile.

"That was many years ago, and I'm still impressed by David's steadfast willingness to do the actual work that brings benefit to beings far and wide, known and unknown. Over the years David has pulled people together at the crucial moments—and didn't just ask others to act, but stepped up himself. NWDA has had no better friend and supporter than David Forsythe."

David's quiet and consistent behind-the-scenes work, institutional memory, and kind support have held the Association together over the years and have encouraged and inspired many. Former President Steve Wilhelm writes:

"What always struck me was David's continuous kindness and even-handedness. Back during the transitional era of Northwest Dharma, when there were only three board members (David, George, and later myself), David radiated good will and made it possible to reach consensus.

"I remember one time when George and I were working through a difficult transition, and David mostly sat there and listened. He didn't say much, but his presence somehow communicated that it was going to be OK, and that we'd figure it out. And we did. It was so long ago I remember neither the dispute nor the resolution, just David's beneficence.

"From my years on the board, I was always very aware of how consistently and invisibly David stayed in the background, working the machinery that kept the organization alive and thriving. So many people benefited from Northwest Dharma's work ... finding dharma groups that changed their lives ... and probably almost none of them had a clue how David made that possible. So thank you, David."



Heart of the Northwest Dharma Association, David Forsythe, moves on at the end of July.

In recent years, former President Julie Welch and Program Coordinator Timothy O'Brien depended on David for his multitude of skills, including his mastery of numerous and increasingly arcane software programs. From the very beginning of NWDA's entry into the Age of Computers and subsequent embracing of email and the internet, David has kept the NWDA files, accounts, announcements and intricate website up and running, with patient and scrupulous attention to detail. (And he's still a whiz at sticking labels on envelopes.)

Both Welch and O'Brien have also relied on David's aura of calm and his nearly (but not quite entirely) inexhaustible patience: "He has been colleague, mentor, and—by example—our Dharma teacher."

Speaking for the entire Northwest Dharma Association, outgoing President Nick Vail adds, "From the bottom of our hearts, we are all grateful for David's dedication and friendship."

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## Northwest Dharma News

### Help Wanted: Board of Directors

The 12-member NWDA Board of Directors currently has three vacancies in its six board-appointed positions. If you are interested in serving on the Board or would like to suggest a possible candidate, please let us know.

Board members typically serve three-year terms, beginning and ending in June. The Board meets monthly, twice a year in person in Olympia (June and October) and the rest of the year by teleconference. Board members need energy and enthusiasm for the work of the Northwest Dharma Association. Skills in fund development and marketing are especially welcome at this time.

### Teachers Meeting: October 1st, 2011

The 2011 Northwest Dharma Association's annual Teachers Meeting will take place as usual on the first Saturday of October. This year that means October 1st. This year's meeting will be held in Seattle. The meeting is open to monastics, teachers and sangha leaders of all traditions. You need not be a Northwest Dharma Association 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](mailto: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](#).

### Welcome New Member Groups

We welcome the following sanghas which have become Northwest Dharma Association member groups since the beginning of 2011:

#### **Dharma Drum Mountain Buddhist Association – Washington Chapter**

Located in Bellevue, Washington, Dharma Drum is a lay-led Chan Buddhist sangha in the tradition of the late Ven. Sheng Yen. More information is available [here](#).

#### **Dharmata Portland**

In the Nyingma tradition taught by Anam Thubten, Dharmata Portland (Oregon) is an affiliate of the Dharmata Foundation of California. More information is [here](#).

#### **Tsinta Mani Choling**

A Spokane, Washington sangha, Tsinta Mani Choling is affiliated with Nyingma teacher Lakshey Zangpo. More information is [here](#).

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## Northwest Dharma News

### The Buddha Still Sits in the Big Yard

Renzi and I used to take care of the Buddha. He sits outside the prison chapel on a small patch of earth that was allotted to Buddhist prisoners by a warden long since retired.

On this patch of earth our Bodhi Tree is a maple. It has a thick trunk and gnarled roots that have grown out of the ground in many places. Hard to believe it blew into this prison during a windstorm as a seed, sprouted from a crack in the sidewalk, then was planted where it now grows by a Buddhist.

A pair of apple trees are nearby. They are siblings; seeds from a single apple smuggled out of the chow hall. They too were planted by a Buddhist.

Between the trees is a pond. It is not big; smaller than a bathtub in the freeworld. But it is the only pond I have ever heard of inside a prison.

Beside this pond is where the Buddha sits. And for as long as any of us can remember, he has always been here, watching over our Sangha meetings and sitting with us in practice.

The only reason Renzi and I were allowed to take care of the Buddha was because the chapel officer, Ms. B., let us. When I first asked, she said no, because it was not our assigned work area. But a week later, she stopped me after a Sangha meeting and told me that she would permit it.

For several years Renzi took off from his job in the afternoons as a janitor and I took long breaks from mine as a clerk inside the chapel, so we could cut grass, rake leaves, keep the trees neatly trimmed so the captain would not make us cut them down, and pull the weeds that grew around the Buddha. It was while doing this we discovered that, like us, Ms. B. liked birds.

Whenever the northern flicker would fly in and issue its strange call, then hammer at the ground for insects only he knew were there, we would go and get her. She was not all that scientific in her observation. "Very cool" were the words she used to describe the flicker.

A meadowlark visited last fall. The first one Renzi and I had ever seen. Ms. B., too. We had to look it up in a bird book later in order to identify what it was.

But, more than birds, Ms. B. liked the cat. A scarred and tough little girl cat who skirts around the inside of the prison like a ghost. The cat used to sleep behind the chapel during the day. In the summer, she curled up next to the building because the sun warmed its bricks. In the winter, she hid beneath the ventilation ducts in order to stay out of the rain.

At some point, I am not even sure exactly when she started, Ms. B. began to take bits of food out to leave for the cat. The food was from her own lunch and, whenever she left it, she always directed kind and encouraging words toward the cat. Once she even called to the cat and tried to entice her to come closer—an idea that, because of the cat's obvious feral nature, did not strike me as a particularly good one at the time.

But it was in her interaction with the cat, and her humane treatment of us, that I realize I was most clearly able to see the difference between a guard and a corrections officer. Ms. B. inspired change/correction through her example as a human being. And that does not mean that she was not tough. When it was time to lock us in our cells and order us around, she never hesitated to do that. But that is far from all she was.

Since Ms. B.'s murder [by an inmate] a lot has been said about prisoners by guards



Photo ©Kevin Farias.



Photo ©Wonderlane.

on television, in newspapers, on the picket line outside the prison, and in front of lawmakers at the state capitol. A lot has been said by people outside of prison who do not even know us, or what it is like in here. Even the governor at a recent press conference counseled the public, "You need to remember that those are bad people in there and they do bad things."

I wish I could say that this had no effect on us, neither as prisoners, nor as Buddhists who practice inside these walls. But the truth is, it nearly tore us apart. At times it made us angry. Quick to point fingers of blame back in the direction from which they were pointed at us. But, worst of all, it made many of us begin to doubt ourselves, question our ability to ever be more than we were before we were sent here.

In this, we have recognized our own failing/ignorance. As a Sangha we have since pulled together and resolved that we will no longer be a vehicle for anger, we will not point fingers of blame, neither will we any longer doubt ourselves.

We understand that referring to all of us inside these walls as bad people may help the governor and others make sense of what happened here. And, if that is the case, we invite them to continue to do so.

But, as a Sangha, we do not share that view. Neither about ourselves, nor others around us who are not Buddhists. We believe in the ability of human beings to change for the better by working with their minds to cultivate compassion and penetrate ignorance. We believe this because we see examples of it every day in here. In others, when they work hard enough to do it. And, in ourselves, when we do.

There is not a member of our Sangha who would not have done all that he could to prevent what happened to Ms. B. Our hearts are broken. And we miss her.

Since her death, no one has seen the cat. Her cat.

And the Buddha area is overgrown. Our Sangha is no longer allowed to meet there, and Renzi and I are no longer allowed to take care of it. We doubt that we will ever be allowed to again.

But we can see the Buddha from the big yard. Sitting nobly among the weeds, he is still there.

**Editor's Note:** *On the evening of January 29, 2011, Corrections Officer Jayme Biendl was found dead in the chapel of the Washington State Reformatory in Monroe, WA. Biendl – "Ms. B." – was well known by both inmates and visitors who used the chapel. An inmate confessed to killing her.*

*Self-educated in prison, Arthur Longworth, 45 years old, has been incarcerated since the age of 18. An essayist and*

*diarist, he is the recipient of a PEN prison writing award.*

*Contributor: Arthur Longworth.*

*Photos: Kevin Farias (cat); Wonderlane (Buddha).*



## Northwest Dharma News

### Spirituality Meets Ecology at Earth Sanctuary

Located on Whidbey Island, a short ferry ride from the mainland north of Seattle, 72-acre Earth Sanctuary is a place to visit and reflect, walk trails, view bird life, and find your own spiritual renewal. Here Buddhist principles abide with nature amidst Neolithic bogs and huge megalithic monuments.

The creation of Chuck Pettis, a dedicated Tibetan Buddhist practitioner and Co-Executive Director of Sakya Monastery in Seattle, the Sanctuary's mission is based on the intention "to combine exemplary ecology with art and spirit".



A hooded merganser and chicks on one of Earth Sanctuary's several ponds.



Earth Sanctuary's massive Cottonwood Stone Circle.

"The manifestation of my life plan is to do as much good in the world as I can while I am still alive," says Pettis. "I love the environment. I love sacred spaces. And I love meditating. Earth Sanctuary brings those loves together in an environment of massive stones, reflective ponds, singing birds, munching beavers and lovely trails."

At Earth Sanctuary, nature is the top priority. The Sanctuary's three ponds are recognized as a habitat of importance by both the Audubon Society and Island County. Over 80 species of birds breed on the property. Under its "500-Year Plan" the Earth Sanctuary team is working proactively to recover old-growth forest.

"My vision is to create an old-growth forest with maximum diversity of plants, birds, wildlife, and fungi," states Pettis. "To date, we have planted over 15,000 native plants and 3,000 trees, rooted in mycelium spores."

"I'm not getting any younger. Thinking of impermanence and the difficulty of obtaining a human birth, in this lifetime I want to use all the known state-of-the-art and best forest management practices to optimize the benefits of Earth Sanctuary's forest and habitat values for future generations."

Within its natural framework, Earth Sanctuary is also a sculpture garden of sacred spaces designed to radiate spiritual power and peacefulness. Having studied the effect of space on consciousness at Carnegie-Mellon University and at Buckminster Fuller's design school at Southern Illinois University, Pettis resolved to study the design techniques used to build ancient monuments and then create stone circles himself to see if a new, contemporary space could alter and uplift consciousness.

"I don't know anyone who meditates or prays too much," states Pettis. "I've tried to create an environment that motivates and facilitates spiritual practice."

Sacred spaces installed at Earth Sanctuary include a labyrinth based on a design from 2500 B.C.E.; two stone circles – one of them the tallest modern stone circle in the world; a 20-ton table-shaped dolmen stone; and a Native American medicine wheel. A second medicine wheel is under construction under the guidance of a shaman of the Nuu-chah-nulth people. "We just installed a gray whale skull at this new site," exclaims Pettis. "It is powerful!"

The nature reserve enhances Earth Sanctuary as a meditation parkland and the spiritual intention provided by the parkland supports the healing of nature.

For example, before its construction the labyrinth site was a tangled monoculture of non-native Himalayan blackberry. This undesirable invasive has been removed and replaced by a wide buffer of native wetland herbs, shrubs, and trees to provide diversity of wildlife habitat. With the goal of restoring a great blue heron rookery the

birds recently abandoned a mile from the Sanctuary, the larger of the stone circles has been surrounded by a belt of young black cottonwood trees. In 20-30 years these will provide excellent nesting spots for the heron colony.

Recently completed at Earth Sanctuary is a traditional Buddhist stupa. The stupa is the most important Buddhist monument and sacred space, representing Buddha's holy body, speech and mind, as well as the path that one follows to become a Buddha and enlightened being. Stupas are holy monuments designed to bring peace and harmony to a community and the world. According to Buddhist teachings, a stupa helps calm your mind, radiates spiritual blessings, amplifies prayers, promotes long life, attracts wealth, helps cure disease, and plants the seeds of enlightenment.

Earth Sanctuary's Retreat House is the retreat center for Sakya Monastery of Tibetan Buddhism. "I wanted to create a stupa to honor my spiritual teacher, His Holiness Jigdal Dagchen Sakya," says Pettis, "and to be a blessing for all who visit the stupa and Earth Sanctuary."

The shape of the stupa represents Buddha, crowned and sitting in meditation position. The square base is the ethical foundation and his throne. The circular rings in the middle are his body. His head is the domed section. The 13 gold rings are the levels of spiritual attainment. The umbrella is the great compassion of the Buddha. The moon and sun represent the intention to relieve all beings of suffering and to attain the happiness of enlightenment. The pinnacle at the top is the crown of Buddha.

Earth Sanctuary partners with the University of Washington Restoration Ecology Network (UW-REN). UW-REN facilitates the integration of students, faculty, and members of the community in ecological restoration and conservation projects. Each year a group from UW-REN conducts a restoration project in the Newman Road area of Earth Sanctuary.

Earth Sanctuary is open to the public seven days a week for a small fee of \$7.00. The Retreat House is available for individual and small group day and overnight spiritual retreats.



The recently completed stupa at Earth Sanctuary.

*For more information about Earth Sanctuary, please visit [www.earthsanctuary.org](http://www.earthsanctuary.org). Information about Sakya Monastery of Tibetan Buddhism is at [www.sakya.org](http://www.sakya.org). Regarding retreat rental inquiries, email Celia Sullivan at [celia@earthsanctuary.org](mailto:celia@earthsanctuary.org) or telephone 360-321-5465.*

*Contributors: Tim Tapping, Chuck Pettis.  
Photos: Courtesy of Earth Sanctuary.*



## Northwest Dharma News

### Interfaith Memorial for Victims of Japan Quake & Tsunami

On Sunday, May 15, an interfaith memorial and compassion service took place in the Chapel of St. Ignatius on the Seattle University campus. The service honored victims and survivors of the powerful earthquake and tsunami that devastated northern Japan in early March.

Seattle University philosophy professor Jason Wirth led off the service, recalling our inter-connections with all beings and the compassion that naturally arises from our recognition of these connections.

After a ten-minute meditation, Kosho Itagaki, resident priest of the Eishoji Soto Zen Temple in Bellevue, Washington chanted the Three Refuges, followed by White Cloud priest Bill Hirsch, who chanted the Great Compassion Dharani in Pali.

Father Patrick Kelly, SJ, stressed again our connection with all beings and the compassion that results from it. He offered a prayer for those suffering in Japan and around the world. Dr. Kólá Abímbólá, a Yoruba priest and visiting scholar at the Center for Global Justice, chanted a Yoruba prayer and dirge, and Rabbi Jason Forbes recited the Kaddish (the Jewish mourners' prayer).

The service finished with reflections and thoughts from the audience, followed by the singing of "Amazing Grace".



Kosho Itagaki, resident priest of the Eishoji Soto Zen Temple in Bellevue, Washington chanted the Three Refuges at the Interfaith Memorial for Japanese earthquake and tsunami victims held May 15th at Seattle University.



Members of the public were invited to ring the large temple bell at Seattle Betsuin Buddhist Temple in honor of those who perished in the disaster in Japan.

The service was jointly sponsored by the Seattle University EcoSangha and the Eishoji Soto Zen Temple.

The Seattle University service was one of many held throughout the Northwest. Seattle Betsuin Buddhist Temple held a First Seventh Day Memorial Service and tolling of the temple bell honoring those who perished in the quake and tsunami.

In pre-modern rural Japan, temple bells were rung repeatedly as a tsunami warning. In Seattle, the public was invited to ring the bonsho, the large temple bell enshrined outside the temple, in memory of the disaster victims. Many, including non-Buddhists from outside the Japanese community, took advantage of the opportunity to express their sorrow and support for victims.

The Seventh Day Memorial is an expression of spiritual oneness with the deceased in the boundless wisdom and compassion of the Buddha. It expresses connection in shared sorrow and is also intended to help participants to heal.

Subsequent seven day memorial services were held each Friday for seven weeks, the traditional Japanese mourning period.

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*Contributor: Bill Hirsch.  
Photos: Jason Wirth, Julie Welch.*



## Northwest Dharma News

### For People of Color: Support for a Retreat

Held each year in Vallecitos, New Mexico, the Annual Meditation Retreat for People of Color offers an opportunity for spiritual reflection, deepening insight, and community building to practitioners of color in a thoroughly welcoming, inclusive, and supportive environment. Attracting many social justice activists, the retreat is now entering its 15th year.

To raise money in support of the annual retreat, many sanghas across the country participated in a special event on May 1st, the "108 Minutes of Peace: A Sit to Support the Vallecitos POC Retreat". One of those was Seattle's People of Color and Allies Sangha (POCAAS). The event was a success – and ended in time for several participants to continue on to the local Labor & Immigration Rights May Day parade.

Many western Buddhists of color have from time to time heard the question, typically from white practitioners, why the need for a "separate" or "special" retreat? David Berrian, a member of the Seattle chapter of the Buddhist Peace Fellowship, is familiar with the question. Here is how he responded to it recently:

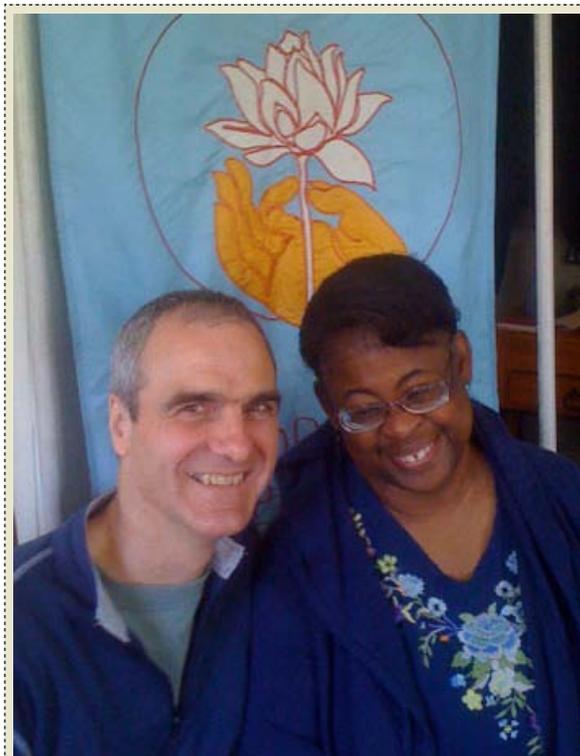
"The term 'People of Color' does have meaning, although the meaning is not precise. Mostly it means 'not European or White', that is, not identifying entirely with those throughout our history of racial politics who have been privileged and powerful.

"Although most white people don't experience themselves as 'privileged' or 'powerful', people of color have a long history of being marginalized, disenfranchised, and systematically denied opportunities that strongly affect their lives in the present. Racial politics continues to be a major force in our society. People of color readily understand this, while among white folks there remains much skepticism and denial.

"A major part of the Buddhist dharma is about developing an understanding of how our minds work – how easily we get trapped in rigid, self-defeating ideas about ourselves and our world which leads to suffering both for ourselves and those around us. Through meditation and dharma instruction we gradually open and radically restructure our relationship to the world. It is not an easy path. Inevitably we must confront how we have constructed our 'self' and the messages we've accepted about our worthiness. So to be successful most of us need the support of a sangha that we trust will lovingly embrace our transformation.

"Dharma practice for most people of color means opening to feelings of pain and of anger at the injustices experienced for generations and for injustices they see being perpetuated today. When they give voice to these feelings in a group with white people, very often the white people have a hard time accepting these words. In my experience white people often want to challenge the legitimacy of those feelings and/or want to be educated about the experiences of colored people.

"Responding to a challenge or taking on the role of educator means the person of color is no longer focusing on being open, on his or her own experience. That is why having special retreats especially for people of color is very important. To progress on the path people need the experience of a sangha that readily understands the world they experience. I'm supporting this retreat not out of charity, but because I value connection with people of color and I know that those who attend this retreat will be enriched and therefore I will be enriched as well."



Denis Martynowych and Elaine Rose at Seattle's People of Color and Allies Sangha fundraiser "108 Minutes of Peace", May 1, 2011.

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For more information about the Vallecitos People of Color Retreat, please visit: [www.vallecitos.org](http://www.vallecitos.org).

*Contributors: Julie Welch, David Berrian.  
Photo: Rick Harlan.*

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## Northwest Dharma News

### BCIMS Celebrates Vesak with Bubbles & Kites

The British Columbia Insight Meditation Society (BCIMS) began its 2011 Vesak celebrations at a Vancouver park where families met with kites and bubbles.

The kite-flying attracted both people who are regular members of BCIMS and people who are not... four families with young children came to share the fun. The membership of BCIMS is primarily westerners who were not brought up in a Buddhist tradition so event planners were pleased that two of those families were ethnic Buddhists of South Asian origin. They were also joined by some young men from Iran who were keen to discover a Buddhist community that included festival and ritual.

Participants flew their kites and then had the children blow bubbles to signify the liberation of all beings: those imprisoned, those hungry and those afraid.

After the bubble ceremony, people went over to the church where BCIMS holds its regular sitting groups, sat in a circle of 40 people and took turns reading the story of the Buddha's birth, enlightenment and parinirvana. After chanting and sitting they took refuges and precepts, then did a metta meditation and dedication of merit before one of our youngest members blew out the candles on the "Buddha Cake" and everyone had a chance to visit and enjoy sangha.

"We feel that observing Buddhist rituals and festivals may end up being one way of building bridges between white convert-Buddhist communities and ethnically Buddhist communities," says BCIMS teacher Adrienne Ross. "Everyone really enjoyed the event and we have plans for an even better celebration next year."

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*For more information about the British Columbia Insight Meditation Society, please visit: [www.bcims.org](http://www.bcims.org).*

*Contributor: Adrienne Ross.  
Photo: Rachel Lewis.*



Young Harley watches kite-flying at British Columbia Insight Meditation Society's 2011 Vesak celebration in Vancouver, BC.



## Northwest Dharma News

### NW Faces at “Maha Teachers Conference”

In keeping with the Buddha’s injunction that members of the Sangha should gather together regularly to maintain a harmonious community and healthy practice, organizers of the 2011 Buddhist Teachers Council meeting brought together close to 250 senior dharma teachers from Europe and North America in early June. The three-day gathering took place at the Hudson River estate of the Garrison Institute in Garrison, New York and was by invitation only.

Among the senior Northwest teachers invited were Chozen and Hogen Bays, Robert Beatty, Jerry Braza, Ven. Thubten Chodron, Greg Kramer, Joel and Michelle Levey, Jacqueline Mandell, Adrienne Ross, and Rodney Smith.

One of the intended outcomes of the conference was “to deepen friendships and collegiality across traditions”. Another was to develop a deep sense of connection, nourishment and value.

All would agree that feelings of warmth, friendship and expansive loving-kindness filled the conference. A great camaraderie amongst the teachers in attendance was palpable.



Some of the Northwest Buddhist teachers who attended the 2011 Buddhist Teachers Council meeting in Garrison, NY, June 8 - 11. Standing, left to right: Jan Chozen Bays, Robert Beatty, Jacqueline Mandell, Jerry Braza. Seated, foreground: Hogen Bays.

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*Contributor: Jacqueline Mandell.  
Photo: Courtesy of Jacqueline Mandell.*



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[VIEW SAND MANDALA PHOTO GALLERY](#)

## Arising & Passing of a Sacred Sand Mandala

During the week of June 18 – 25, the Gaden Shartse Monks Tour visited Seattle. At the Seattle Asian Art Museum they demonstrated, over a period of several days, the creation and ritual deconstruction of a sacred Tibetan Buddhist sand mandala. The monks' visit was sponsored by the sangha Dechen Ling, under the direction of Lama Gen Lobsang Choephel.

Dechen Ling's support has been instrumental in rebuilding the Gaden Shartse Monastery in India after its destruction in Tibet. Gaden Monastery was the original Gelug monastery in Tibet.

To watch a YouTube video of the completion and dissolution of the Sand Mandala in Seattle, with narration, go to [Gaden Shartse Sand Mandala Ceremony in Seattle](#). Another video of the complete creation and dissolution of a sand mandala can be found at the Dechen Ling website (scroll to bottom), [www.dechenling.org](http://www.dechenling.org).



[CLICK ON IMAGE TO VIEW SAND MANDALA PHOTO GALLERY](#)

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*For more information about Gaden Shartse Monastery,  
please visit: [www.gadenshartsecf.org](http://www.gadenshartsecf.org).*

*Photos: © Joel Fraser. Courtesy of Dechen Ling.*



## CONTRIBUTORS

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Jacqueline Mandell	is a Buddhist Meditation Teacher. She is Executive Director of Samden Ling in Portland and a board member of the Northwest Dharma Association.
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Chuck Pettis	is Co-Executive Director of Sakya Monastery of Tibetan Buddhism and creator of Earth Sanctuary. Founder and president of BrandSolutions, Inc., he has long been an avid designer and builder of environmental artworks and is the author of "Secrets of Sacred Space".
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Tim Tapping	has been a Buddhist since 1993, a member of Sakya Monastery since 2001, is on the Board of Advisors, and loves introducing people to Tibetan Buddhism and the Sakya heritage. He serves on the board of the Northwest Dharma Association.
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