

Guest House Newsletter Spring 2010

Message from Alia

It's spring at Guest House after another intense winter. The spirit of the place has continued to blossom over the last few months. I continue to feel gratitude for the place, the staff, and everyone who has made it possible for our work to have a home on the East Coast. Our Emerald Mountain groups thrive in their work here, and the Ridhwan seminary continues to meet here, to everyone's delight. Our programs continue to present an opportunity for those not in the groups, as well as some current students, to come into contact with our work in different contexts. The ongoing Wednesday night meditation group continues with Adam Fuller and Jan Jack as leaders, and Leslie Chyten continues to offer her introductory weekends.

This is a good time to remind everyone of our upcoming programs: *Inquiry and Meditation* (a silent retreat) with Jeanne Hay, March 26 to 29, Byron Brown's *Soul Without Shame* exploring self-judgment, April 29 to May 2, and my *Soul Psychology* retreat May 6 to 9. There are still some scholarships available for these programs. I hope that many of you will be able to work with Jeanne or Byron.



Our Ten Directions board is functioning with dedication and efficiency. I am continually amazed at what is being accomplished by all the committees. I'd like to thank Waltraud Ireland, who was chair of the board in our crucial startup phase, who is leaving the board for a well-deserved retirement. And my ongoing thanks to all who are not leaving the board (yet)! The College of Teachers, which is responsible for programs and Emerald Mountain-related concerns, has developed into a powerful support for the teaching here, and a lively help to me as I deal with the challenges of continuing our work together in the context of my illness. I am happy to say I expect to continue to teach, with the help of our local teachers and visiting teachers, for quite some time.



As well as the central activities of the Diamond Approach work in its various forms, the hospitality aspect of renting to third parties is thriving, and feels to me to be more than a financial support, but also a blessing for the space and a service that is appreciated by many compatible groups. Again we have a wonderful staff to thank for our success in this realm in administration, housekeeping, the kitchen, maintenance and front desk work. Most of us see Guest House a few days per year, but their work goes on every day, to the benefit of all of us.

Alia Johnson, March 2010

Emerald Mountain Five

A new Emerald Mountain group will begin this June, with a meeting in New York city on the 12th and 13th. Prior to that, an introduction for this group will meet April 17 and 18, also in the city. The introduction in April is called *Angels and Essence*, and will be taught by Leslie Chyten, Anne Singer, and Susan Weiley. In June, the official beginning of the group, Alia will also be teaching with them. Please see the Programs page of our website (www.GuestHouseCenter.org), for more detailed information on the new group.

If you have friends interested in the Work, please let them know.

The contact for the group is Cynthia Martin: emeraldmountain5ny@gmail.com

Our New Meeting Room

After three months of renovation, our new meeting room is open for business. The new room is located on the third floor of Guest House, in the rear (north) of the building. The new room has a built-in 5-speaker sound system and drop-down video projection screen for movies and presentations. It is also our quietest room because it is located in the back of the building; perfect for quiet mediation and yoga.



Guest House Now a Wildlife Habitat

In February, the National Wildlife Federation certified Guest House as a wildlife habitat. This spring, keep your eyes out for white tail deer, wild turkeys, fox, coyote, fisher-cats, and gray squirrels when you're on our back trails.



Call for Donations of Books and DVDs

We have recently received a donation of new bookcases, as well as many new books and DVDs for our library. We hope to expand the library into the second floor this spring, and are looking for donations of high-quality books and DVD of all varieties. If you'd like to make a donation, please email:

Michael@GuestHouseCenter.org

Exercise Room

We have received a donation of a brand new stationary bicycle, which is now available for use in our exercise room. As always, we are looking for donations of good-quality weight and cardio equipment. If you are interested in making a donation, please email:

Michael@GuestHouseCenter.org

Guest House Environmental Policy

In December 2009, Guest House became the sixth facility in the State of Connecticut to become certified as a “Green Lodging” facility.

We recognize our responsibility to provide a beautiful and functional facility that also stewards the environment in which it operates. This ideal is executed through the policies we set, the decisions we make and how we budget our resources.

Our aims:

- Reduce waste
- Reuse and recycle whenever possible
- Reduce energy usage
- Conserve water consumption
- Decrease pollution

We do this through:

- Employee awareness, training, and feedback
- Customer awareness and feedback
- Purchasing policies and supplier relationships
- Facilities management that ensures optimum efficiency in all building systems and machinery
- Providing financially adequate resources to achieve the above



We invite our employees and guests to support our environmental policy and help us achieve our aims.

Towards that end, copy of our environmental workbook from the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection is available at the front desk for review.

Ongoing Garden Projects

We are continuing to improve the grounds of Guest House with help from volunteers. Gardens have been designed, plants and bulbs planted, bushes and trees pruned. There is plenty more to do, and if you would like to help with the design or implementation of an area around the property, we could use your help.



We need people who have some sense of garden design and experience with planting, others who just like to dig holes, move rocks, and get their hands dirty, and others who might not want to be involved in the hands-on work but who would be willing to help purchase plants for garden beds or planters.

If you're interested in any of these elements of the ongoing garden project, please speak to Noell Goldberg the next time you see her or contact her at: ngoldberg@hospiceofrockland.org.

Expanding the Use of Guest House

As we move into our second full year of business, many new groups and organizations are discovering Guest House for their retreats, meetings, and conferences.

So far in 2010, we have hosted eleven different non-Ridhwan groups. We have also received a tremendous response to our recent marketing efforts and, going back to February, we have groups booked for every weekend through the end of August.

Some groups we have recently hosted or will soon host are:

Planned Parenthood

The New York Zen Center for Contemplative Care

The Northeast Organic Farming Association

YHOM Yoga

The Foundation for Human Enrichment

The Center for Mindfulness in Medicine, Health Care and Society

Society of Souls

Guilford First Congregational Church

Blue Throat Yoga

As a staff, we receive consistent feedback that the beauty, functionality, and service at Guest House make it the most appealing retreat center on the east coast.



Finance Committee Update

2009 was a challenging year for Guest House, but, thanks to Herculean efforts by many and tremendous support from our community, we continue to build a strong foundation and a thriving center for the Work. We lost money in 2009 primarily because of the Town of Chester's rejection of our real estate tax exemption, (and the legal fees associated with appealing this), and personnel transitions. However, we are projecting a small surplus in 2010. Much hard work and support is still needed to achieve this, but we are on the right track and moving forward strongly. A major challenge we face on many levels is the impact of Alia's illness. However, the Ten Directions board, working with Alia, has taken several steps to mitigate the financial impact on Guest House.



Gratitude from the Development Committee

We send our sincere thanks to all of the Emerald Mountain and Guest House community for your generous response to our year-end request for financial support.

Many of you made donations at the year-end and pledges for 2010. We start this New Year with a solid foundation and confidence that Guest House will continue to grow and thrive as a home for the Work.