

Guest House Newsletter, Autumn 2011

Letter from the Executive Director: Guest House Beats Hurricane Irene

In August the entire Atlantic Coast suffered from one of the largest storms of the last fifty years. Guest House endured the hurricane with aplomb. The weekend of the storm the Hoffman Institute was presenting their first retreat at Guest House. We had spent much of the week preparing the grounds and the building for their arrival. They've booked over 30 nights with us in 2012, and we wanted to roll out our best, regardless of whatever challenges the weather was going to present.

The day before the storm arrived heavy rain swept through the region and soaked the ground, causing us to worry about the structural integrity of the trees to withstand the heavy winds from the oncoming hurricane. Hoffman, meanwhile, in the midst of all this surging weather seemed to be incorporating the energy into their work: there was a lot of screaming, stomping, and discharging happening in the building during the storm.



*The entire property was littered with debris large and small.
All photos by Laura Way*

Sunday morning, around 3 a.m., Guest House lost all electrical power. Will and Chef Steve both spent the night on-site. When the power went out, Will was able to quickly get the

generator online for the sake of our guests and operations, and Chef had stored plenty of water to compensate for our disabled well, which came back online in a couple of hours. Thanks to their preparations we were able to continue service that Sunday when our guests arrived for breakfast. Michael, meanwhile, could be found keeping tabs on the storm at the White Barn windows, and was on-call to assist as necessary.



Will and Steve survey fallen trees in the tennis court.

I was most impressed that the team was not only able to function during this crisis but kept us operational while still acting in the best interests of our guests. Everyone worked so hard giving their best to respond to the situation, regardless of the fact that most of the staff had similar problems going on at home, as well. Leaves flew and branches bent, but in the aftermath we only lost a few trees and several sections of fencing. Other than the main fence that runs along our parking lot, we suffered no other property damage caused by falling trees—especially fortunate since our parking lot was full that Sunday.

By Sunday evening the storm and most of our Hoffman guests had departed, but we were left with a big mess to clean up. Supervised by Will, **it took six guys three full days to get the grounds cleaned up and back in shape. The**

housekeepers wore campers' headlamps to clean the bathrooms by flashlight, while vacuuming up behind the outdoor crew's messy footprints.



Many people had been married under this tree.

However, our problems didn't end with the departure of Irene. **For almost a week, the whole town of Chester was left under a complete blackout, and it was unclear when the power would come back on. Comcast was also down, leaving us with no Internet or phones for an entire week, essentially shutting down our business communications.** Our generator was supplying power to the well, three-quarters of the bedrooms and one meeting room. We had major challenges up ahead: a group of ninety Christian women was coming in later that week for Labor Day weekend. **We had no air conditioning for the meeting rooms and no working elevator.** Since we had no idea when the power would be restored, we worked diligently to find additional generators and resources to carry the remainder of the power

load of the building so that we could ensure the comfort and safety of our incoming guests.

Friends in the neighborhood were in need too: Guest House provided temporary housing for residents from an adult group-home. And in the end the power came back on around 6:45 on Friday evening - in the middle of dinner service, just before the group's first meeting. The ladies applauded, the staff breathed a collective sigh of relief, and life returned to what passes for normal around here.



We recently placed Adirondack chairs around the property.

New Slate of Programs at Guest House

A major component of Alia's original vision for Guest House was that it would offer Diamond Approach-related programming that would be available to those outside the ongoing groups, and would support a dialogue between the Diamond Approach and other modes of work. With that in mind, in January of 2011, Sarah Tremaine, Leigh McCune, Bonalyn Mosteller, Steve Kennedy, Adam Fuller, and Michael Levien formed the Guest House Program Committee to explore the role of the programs open to the general public at Guest House. By the summer, the committee had drawn up a plan, applied for funding, and received a significant grant to fund the development of innovative programming at Guest House over the coming years.

We are very happy to announce our 2012 programs, loosely clustered around the

theme of the body in spiritual work and practice. For more information, visit the Guest House web site. Below, we're providing an overview of our program offerings.

In February, 2012, **Dr. Diane Poole Heller** will explore how trauma and attachment wounding is somatically stored in the body, and will work with participants to release these energetic blockages. This will be a wonderful opportunity to explore the deeply unconscious patterning of our earliest experiences.



Squash and sage from our garden.

Byron Brown will return to Guest House for a third year, this time to lead a program, titled *Falling Awake*, which will activate participants' awareness of the body-intelligence that operates and reveals our inner depths. In May, **Hameed** will lead his first program at Guest House that is open to the general public--an exploration of the nature of the body in the realized state, and how the body is related to our true spiritual nature.



Bees collecting nectar.

Jeanne Hay is also returning to Guest House to lead a workshop teaching tango and bodily awareness with a master tango instructor, **Gawain Bantle**. And to round out the year, **Leah Chyten** will continue her successful series of *Diamond Approach Perspective* classes, which can serve both as an introduction to the Diamond Approach and as a way for spiritual seekers of any path to deepen their practice. Also, if you are not yet registered for **Russ Hudson's** 2011 program on the *Enneagram and the Diamond Approach*, we recommend you do so soon, as we expect the program to completely sell out.

In addition, the **Guest House Program Committee** has begun offering **Ridhwan** teacher sabbaticals, which will allow teachers from around the world to come to Guest House for rest and rejuvenation. The committee is also in the process of forming an advisory council, which will be made up of **Ridhwan** teachers and teachers from other traditions, that will help develop programming in future years.

Right now, we are hard at work developing the functioning of the committee and brainstorming 2013 programs. If you would like to learn more about the new Program Committee, or if you are interested in serving on the committee, please contact Committee Chair, Sarah Tremaine, at stremaine@me.com.



Blue hydrangeas indicate slight traces of acidity in the soil.



Recently plantings by our pond.

Why We Give

We know times continue to be tough, so we want to remind you why your donations are critical to Guest House. **Like all nonprofit educational organizations, Guest House is dependent on contributions to help fund our operations and building and grounds. About 20% of our revenue comes from donations.** The other 80% comes from room and board fees from the Ridhwan groups and third party mission related groups. However **the rates that all the Ridhwan groups pay, including Emerald Mountain, Seminary, Guest House programs, and the Boston group, are below market.** This has been our policy since we founded Guest House. Without your donations, this subsidy would not be possible.

The first three Guest House Fundraising Parties have brought many of us together to hear our fellow student musicians and enjoy friendship and good food and drink. Please come to the final event in New York City: an artist's studio tour on November 12.

Your contribution helps Guest House to continue to provide a comfortable, nurturing environment for those seeking to develop human potential and enrich the world. Donations can be made by credit card on the "Donate Now" page on our website or by mailing a check to Guest House.

Parmelee Makeover

The 18th-century Parmelee House has served as home for various Guest House executive directors. Now, **as Steve Kennedy vacates Parmelee to move into a house of his own, (congratulations Steve and Pattie!!), the Buildings & Grounds Committee is happy to announce that it is giving the building a long-overdue upgrade. In its new incarnation, Parmelee will serve as a private retreat center within the larger retreat center. Our aim is to host small groups here who are looking for a comfortable, secluded haven with historical flavor. It will include four bedrooms, breakout rooms and meeting/eating spaces.**

Of course, we want to ensure that this landmark structure, listed on the National Register of Historic Places, retains as much original flavor as it had when John Parmelee, Jr. built it in 1775. Parmelee was a sexton, as well as a drummer in the Guilford trainband, the colony's civilian militia. The Parmelees were among the founding settlers of Guilford. We don't have any records of how it might have looked inside, but we'd love to fill the place with period furnishings. **So if you have sofas, side tables, dining room furniture, wing or other armchairs, ottomans, lamps, rugs or other pieces that you'd like to donate, we would greatly appreciate hearing from you.** Please contact Jorge Arango at jorge@jsarango.com, and send a picture of the item(s) in question for the B&G to consider.



Take a hike to see the work that's been done on the trails.