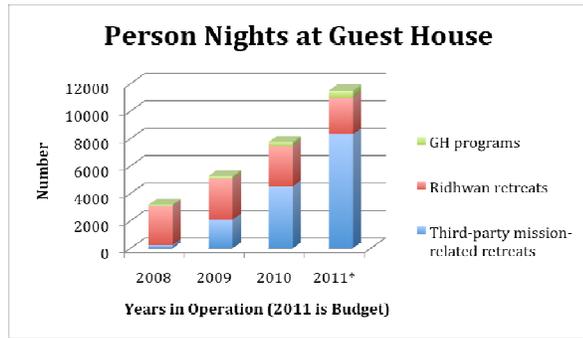


# Guest House Newsletter, Spring 2011

## Guest House Growth and Financial Update

The chart below shows the increase in people meeting at Guest House since our 2008 opening (2011 numbers are estimates):



*Graph by Sarah Tremaine*

As you can see, **the increase in third-party groups' use of Guest House has been steady and dramatic.** Virtually all of our third-party business so far has been from groups with compatible aims working in the areas of psychology, spiritual work, health and wellness, leadership and teamwork, scientific exploration, ecological, social & environmental responsibility.

**In 2010 GH had to face significant financial challenges caused by Alia's passing:** a decrease in the size of the Emerald Mountain groups, a decrease in contributions revenue, and lost revenue from programs that Alia had been planning to teach. We have not yet resolved our real estate tax-exempt status dispute with the Town of Chester, so **taxes and legal fees have remained higher than expected.** However, some of these financial problems have been offset by the increase in mission-related third-party business, gifts from donors, and the Boston Diamond Approach group's use of GH. In 2012 the new Diamond Approach New York group will have its first retreat at GH.

**All in all, GH is in good shape.** While we are still in the process of closing the books for the year, it looks like we met the 2010 budget, excluding the impact of Alia's death and the unresolved real estate tax conflict, which we hope will be settled soon. Bookings are strong

for 2011, Steve is having a positive impact on operations, and we are optimistic that this year will build on our past successes. We are in conversation with several interesting and impactful mission-related groups which will likely be meeting at Guest House this year and in the future. **However, at this point our survival is still partially dependent on receiving a significant amount of annual revenue from donations.**

## Snow! And Winter Maintenance and Improvements

As you may have heard, this winter has brought an unprecedented amount of snow to Connecticut. Will and Bob have been working tirelessly and heroically to clear snow off of driveways and parking lots, while Laura and her housekeeping crew have been busily cleaning the footprints of everyone who comes into the building from outside.

Our maintenance department has also been busy supervising repair work in many bedrooms of the building—repairing leaking pipes, replacing sheetrock, and repainting walls and doors. Additionally, the public restrooms on the main floor have been repaired, painted, and revamped. Room 317 has been painted in new colors. Bob has almost completed his months-long project of refinishing the tables of the dining room: he has single handedly sanded, stripped, and finished nearly all 24 tables.



*Photo by Laura Way*

A **new window treatment** will be installed in the White Barn soon. **Bulletin boards** near the elevator will be used to post information during EM retreats. And with the **purchase of 27 new lamps**, we are moving forward with getting more light into rooms so everyone can read and journal without straining their eyes.

### Alia Memorial

Steve Kennedy suggested creating some sort of memorial to Alia, a request many students have echoed. After talking with Adam, the Board has come up with a way to serve her memory in a manner we believe she would like, that will also give us a reminder of her presence in our lives.

Alia herself spoke about planting **three River Birch Trees** in her memory, so we are discussing where on the property it would be most appropriate to plant this trio. We'd like to get everyone thinking of creating a fund for purchasing the trees, as Guest House's budget is stretched to the max right now. If someone would like to volunteer to spearhead this initiative, we'd love to hear from you. Contact Jorge or Don in EMIII or Laurie in EMI.

Adam is also going through photographs of Alia, one of which will be chosen, enlarged, framed and hung somewhere at Guest House—probably in the lobby area. The **photograph will be accompanied by a short bio of Alia** and her role in founding our beloved center.

### Student Art

**The teachers have asked to make the White Barn a student art-free zone.** Respecting their wishes, we would like to announce that it will remain a pristine, open space in which to do work and inquiry. The only art hung there, if at all, will be at the discretion of the teachers for the purposes of enhancing the field or illuminating their teachings.

However, we still want students in our groups to have the opportunity to display their art. With that in mind, **we are planning two student art exhibitions a year**, which will be organized

around each group's long retreat. The first exhibition will be hung two months before the end of the EMIII retreat and will come down the last day of that retreat. The second will go up during the EMI retreat and remain up for an additional two months. Student artists will apply for inclusion in the show and will be allotted space for one or more art works depending on the number of entries we receive.

Additionally, we're going to try out a program suggested by Gail Staal and Peggy Braun of EMI, which they call, "Art That Wakes You Up." **There will be a library of student artworks from which students can "check out" a piece that inspires them, and which they'll keep in their room during their retreat.** The program will be limited to the amount of easels we have available. We don't want nail holes in the walls, so art must be freestanding). The only way this will work, however, is for each group to be responsible for administering their own program. Someone must be designated in each group to solicit the artwork, take care of doling out the easels and art, and make sure that at the end of the retreat, all easels and art are returned to an area set aside for them in the building. So if you're interested in getting this going, be the initiator in your group! If you have questions or concerns about the policies, send them to [jorge@jsarango.com](mailto:jorge@jsarango.com) (or call him at 917.494.8942).



Photo by Laura Way



Photo by Laura Way

### Building and Grounds Committee Needs Members

The F&F committee has changed its name to the Buildings and Grounds Committee (B&G for short), which more accurately describes the area they work in. They welcome suggestions for improvements around GH. And they would love for anyone with experience in the following arenas to approach them about serving on the committee, (which at the moment numbers just three very busy full-time members): electrical, plumbing or other building maintenance skills; design, art, antiques and decoration expertise; connections to either Target or Restoration Hardware, (who might help us solicit donations of unsold merchandise for GH); hospitality experience; general interest in aesthetics coupled with a willingness to occasionally come to GH to measure and rearrange rooms, install curtains, arrange for reupholstering, etc.

### Strategic Planning Board Retreat

The Ten Directions Board is meeting in June 2011 for a strategic planning retreat. We will clarify the mission/vision guiding our work, assess how well our business model serves our mission, and address other strategic issues affecting long-range plans for the future of Guest House. **The opinions of EM students as expressed in the student survey will be incorporated into decisions about how GH can best serve our community.** This survey was conducted at the EMIII retreat in January and will be conducted at the EMI retreat in February.

### Happy New Year from the Fund-Raising Team

Record-breaking snowfall has put everyone to the test this winter, including Guest House. Barring a leak here and there, however, the roof is holding, the gas fires are burning and the heat is cranked in every room, as almost every weekend is booked with retreats. These are all good signs of success as we approach the third anniversary of the founding of GH. And it's largely thanks to you. Your donations over the last three years have given us the critical support that allows us to bring you such positive news!

Of course, we wish we could say that snow has been our only challenge this year. We *did* raise \$130,000, most of it from Emerald Mountain students. Wow! You hit our targeted goal for the community, and **the total number of people who made donations increased from 2009.** Despite this monumental and much-appreciated effort, though, we still didn't manage to achieve our overall annual goal of \$200,000. **The \$70,000 shortfall was due to an unexpected deferral and the loss of a few key pledges.**

We know it will be a challenge to replace the pledges that have been withdrawn, but we are seeing growing donation support from new guests and students who come to GH. And your continued donations—large and small—are more valuable than ever. We know we can count on you. Consider making a monthly contribution through an automatic payment or make a pledge payable over several years. Please let us know your ideas for any creative fundraising projects and...**please name Guest House in your will!**



Photo by Laura Way

## Guest House Employee Interview: Executive Chef Steve Matterazzo



**GH:** *Why did you decide to accept the position of Executive Chef here?*

**Steve:** I want to work where it makes a difference. Here it's a place where my opinion matters, a kinder place than where I was working before. It was the opportunity to work at a place that had a soul. I wanted to work in a place where people cared as much as I did.

**GH:** *Tell us more about your background.*

**Steve:** I worked as a cook and dishwasher from the time I was 16. I decided to go for it! To go to Johnson & Wales University: one of the top schools for culinary arts in the country. I liked their philosophy on food: they were about the quality, the sentiment behind what you were doing. That food made people happy and how to do it. I finished school and one week later I took a job with Middlesex Hospital. I cooked for patients, for the cafeteria, and for banquets. So I know a lot about diets. I did that for six years. I've been married and had kids since I was 22 years old.

**GH:** *You also worked as Executive Chef in an assisted living facility.*

**Steve:** I opened a brand-new facility. I learned a ton because I got left on my own. I learned how to deal with customers, how to do my ordering, budgeting, staffing, how to delegate, how to set standards. I enjoyed it, but my kids were getting older and I was missing out on my kids' life. An average week was 80 hours. I lasted three years. That place was a chef-eater. The hospital offered

me a big raise and my old job back, so I took it. I was there for another nine years.

**GH:** *What interested you in our executive chef position?*

**Steve:** I needed a challenge, a place where I could use all my skills, including my management skills. I wanted to put my personality into what I was doing. My wife was very supportive, encouraging. She knew I liked those things from the assisted living facility, and kind of missed it. I saw it as an opportunity. I feel this place has limitless potential to grow, to be unique. It's such a unique place, what the mission is here.

**GH:** *What do you like about it now that you're here?*

**Steve:** The people are very supportive. I enjoy working with my staff a lot. My staff is the reason why we're going to be successful.

**GH:** *What direction do you want to take the Guest House food service?*

**Steve:** To keep it exciting for repeat customers, and keep the cuisine current. I want to have a good bank of recipes and menus, a library. And to be creative and try new things, I don't want to repeat the same menus over and over again.

**GH:** *Personally what's important to you in terms of job satisfaction?*

**Steve:** I want to make people happy. I think it's the most important part of what food is. People come here to enrich themselves, and food is a large part of that. If I just wanted to punch a clock I could have, but that's not what I want. I want to see every person give the food a seven on those evaluation sheets. If I don't see a seven I want to fix it.

**GH:** *What's your sense of the kitchen's place in the Guest House mission?*

**Steve:** When people spend a whole day working on themselves, they're using a lot of energy doing what they're doing. When they come down to dinner, they need that to recharge physically and mentally. So I try to make it fun. I try to change things up. I want the whole experience here to be enjoyable.