



guesthouse

NEWSLETTER

Fall 2015

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Conscious Aging: The Webinar

Based on the success of our first Webinar with Sandra Maitri — which dealt with inquiry through the head, heart and belly centers—Guest House is proud to present a new interactive two-part Webinar that will be led by author and Diamond Approach® teacher Sherry Ruth Anderson.

“Ripening Time: the Fruits of Conscious Aging,” will be comprised of two, two-and-a-half hour online sessions held on consecutive Saturdays. The first is scheduled for October 31st between 1 and 3:30 p.m. (Eastern Daylight Time), the second for November 7th between 1 and 3:30 p.m. (Eastern Standard Time).

“For those who embrace the gifts reserved for age, old age becomes freedom, becomes the dance.” — Helen Luke

“If you look at the Bible, Shakespeare or wisdom literature, what you see is bad news or idealizations about aging,” notes Anderson. “It’s a big, confusing mess inside most of us that is

fed by our unexamined beliefs, by memories from childhood of that aunt or grandfather who did or did not age well, by the media, by ‘infomercials’ that promise a lot of time on the golf course.” But in fact, she says, we are living in a new time, with an extra thirty years of life—an extra generation and then some—to grow into “our human possibility.”



Anderson’s Webinar will start by delving into our own beliefs, assumptions, and the outright lies we have absorbed through popular culture. “What happens in other groups I’ve worked with,” she observes, “is an immense amount of energy comes up and people start laughing at the pure outrageousness of what we’ve swallowed whole.”

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Giving Corner

WE NEED YOU THIS FALL!

As the leaves in Connecticut begin to turn their brilliant hues, the Resource Development Committee at Guest House is turning its attention to our annual giving campaign, which we will be launching in October. As of this printing, we have raised about \$60,000 of our \$100,000 total budgeted donations goal. So we felt this newsletter would be a good opportunity to fill everyone in on the current state of Guest House and the reasons we ask you to donate.

Many generous gifts received so far in 2015 are already making a huge impact on GH. The **\$50,000 Waterworks Fund**, announced in June, is part of the total \$100,000 Budget Goal, and is currently **74% percent funded** (\$37,000 of the \$60,000 raised to date is for the Waterworks Fund). Your support so far has

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Essential Contemplations

As we approach the fall with its gifts of apple cider, pumpkins and Thanksgiving, we thought it would be a good time to offer some views on the concept of generosity.

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“Rivers don’t drink their own waters; trees don’t eat their own fruits. The salt seasons the soup in order to have its purpose fulfilled. Live for others!”

—Israelmore Ayivor

.....

“Rest in the knowledge that God is both abundantly gracious and ridiculously generous.”

—Jared Brock

.....

“If you can’t feed a hundred people, then just feed one.”

—Mother Teresa

.....

“When you see that your focus on your self, your separateness, your preoccupation with your personal life, are all barriers against the natural order of reality, you become more willing to be open and loving...You see that generosity is our nature. There is no loss in letting go of your point of view; there is tremendous gain—yet no self gains it. The gain is everyone’s gain, the gain is for the universe.”

—A.H. Almaas

Guest House News

ON THE MOVE AND IN THE GROOVE

We’ve been busy building a stronger organization all summer, a season that saw various staff changes and new appointments at Guest House. Mark these down because we’ll quiz you later!

- **Rich Kerrigan**, who’s been consulting on maintenance issues at Guest House, has been officially appointed our new *Facilities Director*. He brings a wealth of knowledge from his career as an environmental engineer to the job.

- If you read our last newsletter (and we know you pore over every word), you’ll remember that **Nick Schultz** moved out of the kitchen and dining room duties for which he was hired to become *Facilities Assistant* under Rich.



Steve, Tom, Mike, Justin

- **Marianne Hile**, that incredibly unflappable redhead at the front desk who has led Retreat Services and made everything run as smoothly as a well-oiled engine, is now also *in charge of sales*. No one has a better knowledge of who comes here and for what type of work. We’re sure she’ll be as astute at bringing in new groups as she’s been in taking care of the ones that already come to Guest House.



Rich, Marianne

- We also reported last time that **Tom Oates** was promoted to *Executive Chef*. New kitchen developments include **Stephen Kennedy, Jr.**, a longtime cook, who is now a *full-time chef*. And we’ve hired **Justin Greco** as another *full-time chef* to support the culinary excellence for which we have become known.



Charlie, Ruth

- **Charlie Schillberg**, who has worked in the kitchen for as long as we can remember, has revealed a wealth of talent and interest in the field of technology that he’s kept hidden all these years. He is now providing *IT/Web services and administrative support* to our retreat services department and helping enhance all Guest House’s marketing materials and efforts.

Congratulations to all. We know you are what make us shine!

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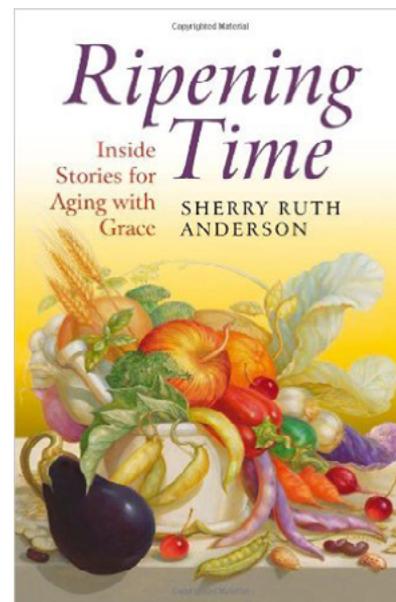
Conscious Aging: The Webinar *(Continued from page 1)*

This process of inquiry helps participants demystify their fears and assumptions and open to what Anderson has called “the secrets and subtleties of growing old.” She readily lists some examples: “The way you begin to treasure silence. The tenderness where previously there were judgments—about young people, old people, your mother, yourself. The way the boundaries you used to put around your experiences begin to soften and melt so that it is not simply a matter of this event, that event, but more a matter of flow, an openness to life you never have felt before.”

Anderson, author of *The Feminine Face of God* and *The Cultural Creatives*, devoted her latest book—*Ripening Time: Inside Stories for Aging with Grace*—to this subject. It could hardly be more relevant today, she believes:

“We are the first generation—with enough people who are aging and relatively healthy, relatively educated, relatively conscious—to have a never-before chance to grow up beyond what anyone’s imagined.”

It takes great courage, great questioning, and a real spirit of adventure— and one more thing: You want the support of others who will go there with you. I can’t think of anything I’d rather do or any place I’d rather be than discovering the truth of what we are now and what we are becoming.”



The \$125 cost of the Webinar includes both sessions, which will offer a live talk followed by inquiry in small groups and an interactive question and comment period. If participants must miss a session, they can download it for later viewing. Depending on the level of interest and participation, Anderson may form an inquiry group to continue these explorations, which would meet online for one Saturday a month over a six-month period. For more information about this online event or to register, please go to guesthousecenter.org and click on Programs, then “Ripening Time.”

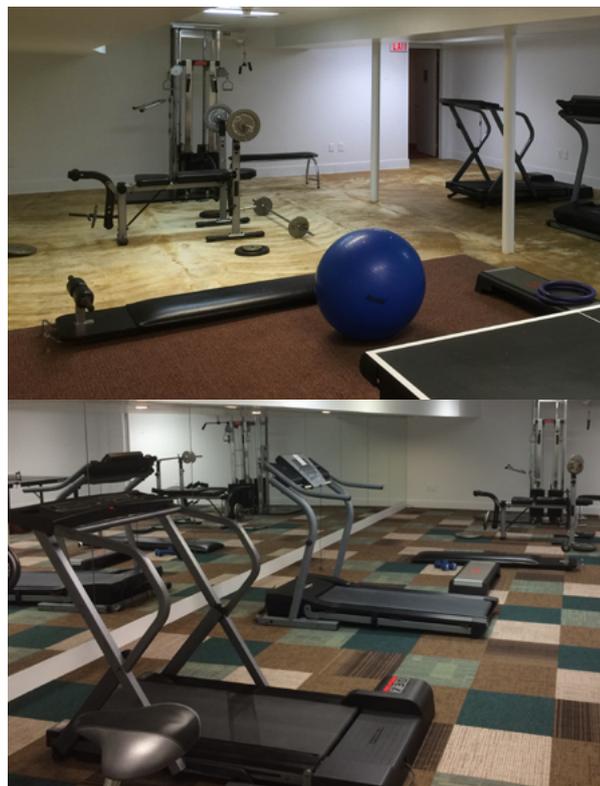
Guest House News *(Continued from page 2)*

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY

“Milestone” might sound like hyperbole when applied to five-year anniversaries, but in the retreat and conference center business—believe us—it is an apt modifier. So it is with great joy that we celebrate not one, but two five-year anniversaries here. Thank you **Ruth Morales Hayes**, one of our housekeepers, and Prep Cook **Mike Walden** for staying with us! We so appreciate your dedication.

GOOD FIT

There are probably hundreds of guests who don’t know we have a fitness room. That’s too bad. First of all, there’s a sauna and showers down there folks! Those of you who have wanted to expend copious amounts of sweat on a treadmill have ventured into what might have previously felt like a dungeon. But we recently revamped the area with new carpet tiles that vivify the space and make you want to exercise. Who said a fitness room has to look drab? We’re hoping even lollygaggers might be motivated to put on some jogging shorts and run in place. If not, of course, there’s always the sauna...



Fitness Room Before and After

(Continued on page 5)

Waterworks Fund Update

The Waterworks Fund got off to a roaring start this summer. The Guest House Board of Directors immediately pledged \$17,000 to get it going, and an additional \$20,000 has arrived in the last two months as we started the improvements, putting us at **\$37,000 raised of our \$50,000 goal**. This has made a difference in these ways:

- A new water heating system delivering hot water within six seconds of turning on the tap, no matter how many people are showering or at what time of day or night
- A new roof over the sunroom: This involved reconstructing several dormers that had rotted from improper flashing, replacing all the flashing, replacing inadequate scupper drains with larger copper ones fitted with inline heating cables to keep water flowing in freezing temperatures, a new roofing membrane

But there's still plenty to do. Other projects we need to address immediately include:

- A water treatment system to soften our water and prevent calcification in our pipes
- New well and booster pumps
- Septic tank drainage and a new septic pump

AND even when we raise the additional \$13,000 needed for Waterworks, we will need another \$27,000 to reach our total fundraising goal of \$100,000 for 2015. This additional money supports our operations and keeps Guest House clean and bright.

Giving Corner

(Continued from page 1)

allowed for crucial upgrades to various water-related systems as well as repairs necessitated by the damaging effects of water on our building (see Waterworks Fund Update, left, for more specifics). There have been many improvements around the grounds, including new plantings and further landscaping around the labyrinth and, in the building, a snazzy new carpet for our fitness room downstairs. A targeted donation also improved our WiFi capacity, doubling the amount of simultaneous streams that are possible, from 100 to 200. Thank you all for the gifts that have made these things possible!



Work on the Sun Room roof progressed smoothly

Despite these encouraging developments, we face big challenges in 2015. Last year was not an easy one for Guest House. A few last-minute large group cancellations resulted in a sales revenue shortfall. The severe winter's effects have led to other unforeseen—and thus unbudgeted—expenses. We have responded appropriately, instituting a new cancellation policy to help us minimize the potential loss of revenue caused by late cancellations, as well as redoubling our sales efforts to fill in vacancies with daylong groups. At the moment, year-end sales figures are looking very positive, but there is still the possibility of a shortfall in 2015. Guest House is also an aging facility susceptible to the wear and tear of thousands of visitors every year, as well as from winters that have been, for the past two years especially, extraordinarily hard on the building and its infrastructure.

It is an undeniable reality that most non-profit organizations would not survive without donations, especially in the current economy, which, despite increases in other sectors, continues to present fundraising challenges for small and large organizations alike. We are no different. Like your local opera company, after-school program or food bank, we depend on donor dollars to meet our budget. By giving to Guest House, you support groups that carry their transformational work from our nurturing holding environment out into the world. It really is about more than just our facility and grounds. It is about the work that we nurture and cultivate here, the creativity and possibility that work awakens in those who come to Guest House, and the effects of that work in the larger world.

When you receive your annual fund letter or e-mail in the coming month, please be as generous as you can. Help Guest House create positive change in the world.

From the Kitchen

Guest House News

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SWEET SURRENDER

Now that you've packed away your bathing suit for the fall and the temperature has begun to drop, you can take a break from all that raw food and that carb-less diet. Here's a sinfully delicious way to break summer's rigorous regimen. And if you need some virtue to cling onto and justify your indulgence, we're happy to enable: they're dairy-free!



HEATH BAR BROWNIES

Makes about 20

- 1 cup flour
- ½ tsp. baking powder
- 2/3 cup cocoa powder
- ½ tsp. salt
- 4 eggs
- 1 cup vegetable oil
- 2 cups sugar
- 2 tsps. vanilla
- 1 cup Heath bits

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
2. Sift flour, baking and cocoa powders, and salt into a bowl. Set aside.
3. Lightly beat eggs, then add the vegetable oil, sugar, and vanilla and beat until sugar is dissolved.
4. Gently fold in dry ingredients and Heath bits to form a batter.
5. Pour batter into a lightly greased baking pan with tall sides and place in preheated oven for about 20 minutes. When a toothpick inserted into the center comes out clean, the brownies are ready.
6. Remove from oven, let cool. Then cut into squares and stack attractively on a plate.

BENCH, MARKED

On Wednesday, September 2nd, a small clutch of board members gathered by the labyrinth to honor the incalculable contributions of our former executive director, **Steve Kennedy**. We presented him with a bench on which we placed a plaque of remembrance and appreciation. Behind the bench we planted a river birch, a memorial to our founder Alia Johnson, which Steve had always felt we should have (he also hatched the idea for and built that labyrinth).



Steve at the Labyrinth

We are so grateful for Steve, who we truly believe saved Guest House at a pivotal, and sad, point in our history. Our beloved founder, Alia Johnson, had died, and with her had gone a certain sense of purpose. Steve helped us reorient ourselves toward a new mission—not unlike Alia's original vision, but more adapted to the realities



River Birch at the Labyrinth

of the times—and turned us into a truly professional operation. His love of this place is so moving to us. So when you're out by the labyrinth again, have a seat on his bench and just feel his steady, loving, open presence. And know that, were it not for him, you might not be sitting there today.

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Our Gang: Metal Clay Mojo Returns to Guesthouse

A brief conversation with Windsor, Connecticut-based Lis-el Crowley, who organizes the Metal Clay Mojo Conference at Guest House every other year. This is one of several arts groups that meet here. You can visit them at metalclaymojo.com.

Q: What is Metal Clay Mojo and what do you do on your retreats?

A: Metal Clay Mojo is an international conference/retreat that is focused on creative stimulation and building community within the world of metal clay jewelry artists. It is a combination of presentations and demonstrations by world-class artists and roundtable discussions on a variety of topics during the day. In the evenings, there are hands-on creative activities and social interaction.

Q: What do you like about Guest House?

A: I love the energy and vibe of Guest House. The warmth and hominess creates a perfect atmosphere for the kind of interaction I like to foster at Mojo. The accommodations are comfortable and the food is excellent and healthy. I also like that we can have the place all to ourselves.

Q: Is there something that's worked particularly well for your participants, or do you recall any memorable interactions you've had with GH staff?

A: The staff is fantastic. Bob McKinley [Retreat Services] is amazing. I tell him what I need him to do and he does it. If only my husband and kids were like that! Everyone is friendly and helpful. I also love the various sitting areas where individuals can sit quietly and groups of people can have their own impromptu gatherings.



Noortje Meijerink



Photos Courtesy of metalclaymojo.com