

## Guest House Newsletter Fall 2009

To the Emerald Mountain and Guest House Community,

The Board of Directors of Ten Directions is very happy to announce that we have selected Adam Fuller to be the Executive Director of Guest House. Many of you have known Adam for a long time or more recently when visiting Guest House. He has been an important member of the Emerald Mountain community since the beginning. As a teenager, almost fifteen years ago, Adam cooked for Alia's first retreats!

Adam has been actively involved in all phases of the four-year journey that created the center we have today, including the search for a facility, the fund-raising, the development of the board governance and operating structures, and all areas of Guest House operations. After setting up the kitchen and staff for the opening, Adam became the Assistant Director, and then assumed the interim Executive Director position last fall for four months. He also launched and led the sales and marketing department. This year Guest House sales will double and 2010 is on track to grow 50%.

Adam earned a BA in political science from Oberlin College and a Masters degree in journalism from NYU. He was an adjunct professor at NYU teaching writing, media history and first amendment law in the journalism program. Adam has edited various books, including co-editing Hameed's *Diamond Heart Book 5*, which will be released later this year. Adam is a member of Diamond Heart Retreat group 4, and a leader of an EM 4 inquiry group, as well as Guest House's weekly meditation group.

We are indeed blessed that Adam will now assume the leadership of Guest House. Please join the Board and give Adam our enthusiastic support. We are confident he will make Guest House an alive and dynamic retreat and conference center for us all.

Josie Sentner  
Chair, Ten Directions



Guest House from across the pond

### Guest House Update from Adam Fuller, Executive Director

Hi Everyone,

Here is a brief update about the many changes that have happened at Guest House over the last couple of months. It has been a very busy time, but I'm starting to see the light at the end of the tunnel.

We have three new employees:

First, Michael Levien has accepted the job of Executive Assistant. He moved to Guest House on Saturday, August 29 and began work on Monday the 31st. Previously, Michael worked as manager at several high-end food stores doing ordering, customer service, and much more. He is also a graduate of Sarah Lawrence in New York, where he was a student of Nancy Baker, whom some of you know from EM 1. Michael is a member of EM III. At Guest House, Michael will be filling a number of roles, including assisting me with programs and marketing, helping in the office, and managing our audio/video system.

Second, we have hired Jim Emswiler as our sales manager. He will be working three days per week on outside sales, which are all groups and events other than Emerald Mountain and our Guest House programs. Jim is the former Executive Director of Mercy Center, a retreat center in Madison, CT. Besides bringing contacts of dozens of retreat groups, Jim has years of experience with every aspect of the retreat center business. He has already been very helpful to me in many areas of Guest House operations. I feel lucky to have him here.

Finally, we have hired a new head chef. Donald Whitney began work on Wednesday, September 2 and received a standing ovation at the end of the first retreat he cooked for. I received 50 applications for this job, and interviewed 12 candidates, mostly in person, some up to three times. Don was one of the main chefs at Jordan Caterers, the top catering company in CT, for seven years. If you're interested in seeing the type of work he did there, you can check out their website here: [www.jordancaterers.com](http://www.jordancaterers.com). Personally, I'm thrilled to have someone I'm confident in running our kitchen.

Bob McKinley, whom many of you know as Will Galvin's assistant, has joined our staff full-time, doing room setups, maintenance, renovations, and dozens of other projects. Bob is generally known as the hardest working man at Guest House, and we're lucky to have him here full-time.

### **We are also doing a lot of work on our building:**

We have finished the renovation of two new offices in the basement, which Michael and I will now occupy.

Our sauna is now working and available for use. We have also deep-cleaned our fitness room and are beginning to move equipment into it. Thanks to Jorge from EM III for our first donation of exercise equipment.

We've moved the ping-pong table into the fitness room and used spare furniture and donated books to set up the library in the pool room. It's now a beautiful and inviting space to read, drink coffee, or do exercises. We will be accepting donations of high-quality books and fitness equipment at the upcoming Holy Ideas and EM III & 4 retreats. If you are interested in making a donation, email: [Michael@guesthousecenter.org](mailto:Michael@guesthousecenter.org)

As you can tell, it's been a productive and exciting time around the building.

### **Thanks to our staff:**

Our staff has done a wonderful job helping us through this very difficult transition, supporting me, each other, and Guest House. Here is a partial list of what our individual staff members have accomplished over the last month.

Laura Way did a wonderful job coordinating and covering three retreats in 10 days while Janet was away at Asilomar,

while at the same time working in housekeeping, the kitchen, and processing registrations for the upcoming retreats. Honestly, it's hard to keep track of how much Laura accomplishes around here.

Bob and Will renovated 400 square feet of offices in two weeks with a tiny budget, led the project to create the library, and spruced up many other areas of the building, all while keeping up on the day-to-day maintenance of Guest House and helping to plan our new staff structure.

Janet Kass has continued to receive rave reviews from our guests for her coordination of retreats and front desk coverage. Many groups want to book dates for next year before leaving the building, due in large part to Janet's sensitivity to the needs of the groups and willingness to meet them.

Sam Johnson, our sous chef, filled in as Executive Chef for a month during our chef search. He cooked for six retreats on his own and continued our high standards. The rest of our kitchen staff has also stepped up in the last weeks under Sam's leadership, taking on greater responsibility and working faster and harder when we were short-staffed.

Liz Rountree has assumed a supervisory role in housekeeping, helped out in the kitchen and at the front desk, and kept our building looking lovely throughout a very busy summer here.

Rhonda Nutile, our consummate professional in the office, has held together our office, our financial systems, our payroll, and our HR department in a very busy time. She's also been a crucial advisor to me in the staff reorganization process over the last month.

Also, special thanks to Jan Jack. Jan co-leads our weekly meditation class, helps

spread the word about us in the local community, and volunteers countless hours beautifying and supporting Guest House.

The staff, as well as the board and volunteers, deserve a lot of credit and gratitude, not only for holding Guest House together during a busy transition, but for taking the transition as an opportunity to improve our facility, our systems, our services, and our ability to support the Work we are all here to do.

Adam

## New Year's Eve Party, 2009

Guest House will again host a New Year's Eve party for Emerald Mountain students, their friends, families, and kindred spirits. We will have live music, fantastic food, a midnight bonfire, and more. For more information, or to get involved, email [michael@guesthousecenter.org](mailto:michael@guesthousecenter.org).



New Year's Eve at Guest House, 2008

## Announcing our Next Volunteer Event

Our next volunteer event will take place Monday and Tuesday, October 19 and 20. As before, students are welcome to arrive the night before the volunteer work begins, which is Sunday, October 18. Since an Emerald Mountain III weekend will be ending that day, volunteers are asked not to arrive before 4 p.m. Guest House will provide dinner on Sunday night, breakfast, lunch, and dinner on Monday, and breakfast and lunch on Tuesday. Possible jobs include: deep cleaning, furniture and drapery cleaning, window washing, library organization, and online marketing research. Outdoor jobs, weather permitting, will include leaf clean-up, fall planting, trail work, and deck and deck furniture cleaning. As before, we will gather for optional sitting meditation in the mornings. This is a wonderful opportunity to gather in support of Guest House, and to be with each other in a way that supports an embodied expression of our Work together.



Noell Goldberg at our spring volunteer weekend

## Social Action Committee News

Although largely an affluent community, Chester is also home to “invisible” and needy individuals, some of whom are the isolated elderly, and others who find themselves struggling financially. Our donations have been a help, as the town Human Services Director indicates in her note below. The Committee will continue collecting items for the food pantry, items that can be donated to the local family shelter, and will collect money to help with groceries, and in the winter months, heating for these individuals. In addition, the Committee is considering other ways in which the Emerald Mountain community can support the residents of Chester.

Rosie Bininger, MSW and Human Services Director for Chester writes: “On behalf of the Town of Chester, I would like to thank you and all the members of the Diamond Heart group for your thoughtful and generous donation to the town’s food pantry. The food has helped re-stock the shelves, and the money was turned into small gift certificates for \$10.00 for residents to purchase milk and bread. A great many of Chester’s families have been enriched by your gift. Thank you again for recognizing a community need.”

## Facility and Forest Committee News

The facility and forest committee is working on many projects at Guest House. One current project is the adoption, by students, of various garden beds on the property. Beds in need of some attention and care have been identified by students willing to prepare them for planting, purchase plants and mulch, and maintain them on an ongoing basis. Guest House has agreed to water

them. You'll see what a difference this has made, and hopefully, will continue to make in the beautification of the grounds. Thanks to Daphne Cruze-Zug, Betts Cassady, Gloria Leinbach, Josie Sentner, Carol Fierman, Tracy Kirshenbaum, and Neil Moylan. If you are interested in contributing to this ongoing effort, please speak to Noell Goldberg.

Another outdoor project under consideration is the creation of a contemplative site in a woodland stand of trees on our property. A simple wooden bench would draw people in, and other additions will be considered as the project develops.

Indoor projects are many, and while some are currently being addressed, many are longer-range projects that will have to await funding. Students are working on creating window treatments for the white barn that will eliminate back light and the afternoon sun, while allowing a view of the sky and treetops. Decisions and plans are still being made regarding a meditation space, the Guest House store, and the conversion of the tavern into a multiple-use space. If you have an interest in participating in the implementation of any of these projects, please speak to David Schulz or Waltraud Ireland.

## **Helping Guest House and the Committees that Support Our Retreat Center**

A number of committees help the Board to function and keep Guest House running smoothly. Volunteers willing to join are always welcome, particularly those with valuable skills to offer such as experience with marketing, public relations, budgeting and financial control, facilities management, landscaping, or landscape design. If you are interested, please speak to any of the board

members: Josie Sentner, Jill Berman, Susan Weiley, Leslie Chyten, Patricia Simko, Jorge Aranjó, Waltraud Ireland, Laurie Leonard, Bonalyn Mosteller, Jerry O'Halloran, Don Shaw, Cory Greenberg, or David Schulz.

## **A Note from Jeff Collins**

This December, we will have the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Alia's beginning her work with the East Coast Group (as it was known in those days.) We have had rituals to mark the fifth and tenth anniversaries, and I would like to see if there is group interest in having a ritual for this anniversary. I will look for a moment at the Holy Ideas weekend to see if there is group-wide support for such an event, then try to have a meeting with a group to plan it and make the necessary preparations. Please let me know if you have suggestions or comments: [jfgisela@lightlink.com](mailto:jfgisela@lightlink.com)

## **Transportation**

In addition to the regular van pick-ups from the Old Saybrook train station, student volunteers continue to help students access rides at off-hours, when the van is full, and when rides are needed from the city. For the Holy Ideas group, Ralph Curcuru, coordinates rides from the train to Guest House and your fellow students provide these rides. Steve Jones coordinates car rides from the city. For Emerald Mountain III, Susan Moore is the contact person for rides from the train, and Anthony Braun coordinates rides from the city.

## **Fundraising Report**

We are thrilled that Adam is our new Executive Director and now ask all members of our Guest House Community to make a year-end donation to support

Adam's work to improve the operations and facilities. Some of you have already made annual pledges for each of the first five years of Guest House. These pledges continue to be an important source of revenues that help to fund operating expenses.

In 2009 Guest House will double the revenue from 2008 and will be close to meeting the breakeven operations budget. However, like all small businesses we have been affected by the recession, and the Emerald Mountain student attendance at Guest House retreats is down about 10% from what was budgeted. We have been careful to reduce expenses to offset the decline in revenue and have had to postpone some improvements. At the same time, there have been some unbudgeted necessary expenses. The frequent hard rains this summer finally took a toll on the roof over the Tavern,

and we had to replace that area of the roof in early September. Unexpected expenses like this have reduced our excess cash reserves, and we hope to replenish them with year-end donations.

Last spring we asked for support for a wish list of small projects. In spite of the difficult times, some of you responded and Guest House was able buy a new, speedy toaster for the dining room and a new computer that was necessary to run the web site in-house and to create and send out marketing materials.

The Ten Directions Board hopes many more of you will consider making a pledge for 2009 and for future years. You will soon hear more about this pledge campaign. And remember, all contributions, both large and small, are gratefully appreciated.

-Ten Directions Board of Directors