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The Guest House Community

In this issue, we look at the meaning of community and focus on several of the groups who come here regularly. This gives you a glimpse of the many types of communities that gather here and celebrates how they form the larger community that is Guest House in the world.

The Guest House Community is made up of all the groups that come here. Each group’s particular life-affirming work ripples out into the world as an integrated force for good. At this time of discord and factionalization around the globe, we at Guest House feel it is vital to remember how much we affect and impact one another.

At our core are the Guest House management and staff. We foster a culture of collaboration and mutual respect driven by a profound commitment to supporting groups that do human potential work. Our small but cohesive team strives to help guests feel at home and deeply held and works to make every part of their experience—from the facility to the food—welcoming, nurturing and beautiful.

In this “Community”-themed issue, we highlight some of the hundreds of groups that have stayed at Guest House. Each group that comes here is another manifestation of community, focused on a particular modality, wisdom tradition, cultural enrichment, or devotion to wellness and healing. They are Buddhists, Sufis, Christians and



Thank-you notes from guests on display next to the elevator

Jews; artists, storytellers and songwriters; nurses, physician assistants and holistic health practitioners; trainers of the next generation of leadership—and our management and staff support them in every way possible. Though we are individual entities, we are connected

(Continued on page 2)

GIVING CORNER

It Takes a Village

More than just a place, Guest House is a vibrant, alive community of many groups of dedicated people who gather here to explore human potential and the truth of our essential oneness.

Guest House hosts organizations focused on transformation in the realms of social awareness/action, mindfulness, leadership, environmental responsibility, spirituality, psychology, health and wellness, education, the arts, and related fields.

To ensure that she is able to weather whatever challenges may be ahead, and that “the Guest House Community” continues to flourish, Guest House must be nurtured and cared for. Some ways you can support her mission are below.

DONATE TODAY
guesthousecenter.org/give

“When you give to Guest House you don’t give it away.”

You stand with the Guest House Community and the more than 3,000 guests who come each year to develop human potential and enrich the world

See **Ways to Give** on page 3!

Essential Contemplations

Guest House fosters community of all kinds, and everyone who comes here is a part of the Guest House Community.

.....

"It is possible that the next Buddha will not take the form of an individual. The next Buddha may take the form of a community—a community practicing understanding and loving kindness, a community practicing mindful living. This may be the most important thing we can do for the survival of the Earth."

—Thich Nhat Hanh

.....

"Let there be no illusions about the difficulty of forming this kind of a national community. It's tough, difficult...But a spirit of harmony will survive in America only if each of us remembers that we share a common destiny."

—Barbara Jordan

.....

"We are not separate. We are a network. Just as you have cells and organs in your body which cooperate to make a harmonious entity, all life on earth, all forms of life cooperate to make one body. Our individual health will contribute to the health of the whole. This is why the more open you are, the more willing you are to be loving and to serve."

—A.H. Almaas

NEWS

GH News

ALL DRESSED UP

You may have noticed our piano lobby is looking more fetching. That's because new fabrics have spruced up the older furniture. Nothing like a makeover!

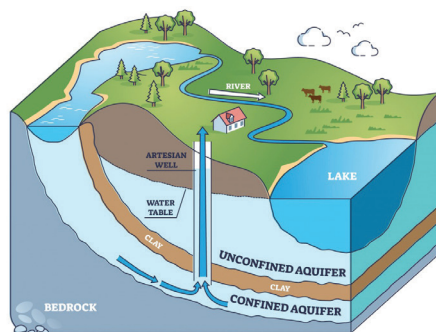


REELIN' IN THE YEARS

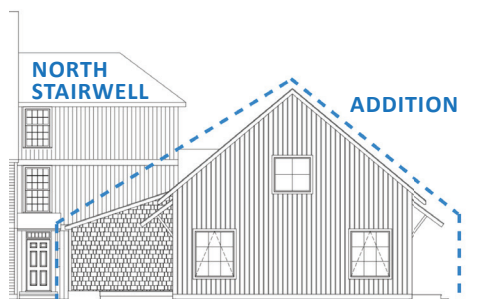
Long-term staff are the lifeblood of Guest House. This past year marked significant anniversaries: Kristin Clark, Ben Guilmette, and Michelle Crete (3), Sonia Fernandez and Carol Fiore (4), Brian Schultz (5), Keith Bowen (9), Rich Kerrigan (10), Saralyn Pratt (11), Marianne Hile and Ruth Morales (15), and Charlie Schillberg (16).

DIGGING DOWN

With our old well aging and declining in efficiency, it's time to drill a new well to ensure ample water supply.



The water table and a well



Drawing is a work in progress and likely to change

The GH Community

(Continued from page 1)

by our mutual desire to improve the world. When these groups leave Guest House, they carry new perspectives, strategies and enthusiasm back to their own communities and out into the world—across Connecticut, the country, and the globe.

We have all heard the popular metaphor of ripples caused by a pebble thrown into water. Mother Teresa had a different take on this that feels more appropriate to Guest House. She said, "I alone cannot change the world, but I can cast a stone across the waters to create many ripples." We see Guest House as the pond that holds the water that allows the skipping stones of the work of our groups to ripple out, touching places and people we never see. Our holding provides the space that heals people and communities, mends fissures, and promotes unity across humanity. Guest House is grateful to be a home for this vital work. 🌸

WELCOME NEW BOARD MEMBERS

We welcome two new members to our board of directors: Christine Marshall (program director at Insight Meditation Society) and Catherine Hayes (a leadership coach with groups such as Leadership Circle, Enneagram Institute and Grof Transpersonal Training Institute). And we welcome back Nancy Closs (who worked in corporate finance for, among others, Blackrock, Credit Suisse and New York Life).

ADDING UP

This fall, we plan to break ground on a new, larger-capacity meeting room that'll enable us to attract and accommodate larger retreat groups! 🌸

Green Lodging Community

By Rich Kerigan, GH Facilities Director

I came to Guest House having been an environmental engineer and consultant for 25 years. Obtaining compliance with all of our permits, instituting best management practices, and educating the staff are all vitally important. Permit compliance is critical in ensuring sustainability. Doing the right thing and being a responsible steward of the land impacts your reputation as a responsible community member.

I quickly realized that we needed a shift in the culture surrounding permit compliance and environmental practices. I was grateful to find the Connecticut Green Lodging program, and to discover that Guest House had been one of the first certified facilities in the state.

The program is a set of environmentally friendly best practices that the organization agrees to follow to remain a sustainable business, including:

- Maintaining permits responsibly to avoid tainting the land or inviting other negative consequences; and
- Limiting waste in all of its forms. Rethink, Refuse, Reduce, Reuse, Refurbish, Repair, Repurpose, Regift and THEN Recycle.



The program encourages participation, communication, education, and continued improvement.

Over the course of a year, GH staff met, planned, researched, and synthesized all types of data before submitting our self-certification.



This program requires the continuous vigilance of the entire staff. A core group leads the effort, but the rest of the staff must participate to ensure success. GH does everything possible to encourage participation, including holding paid planning sessions, sharing meeting minutes, and soliciting ideas for improvements. I am proud that our staff was amenable to these changes and enhancements. Many practices were readily accepted and before long, a newfound respect for these green practices became a part of our culture. We now are very conscious about whatever comes into the building, how it goes back out, and everything that happens to it in between. 🌸

Ways to Give



1) *Make a cash donation.*

In-person at the front desk or online at guesthousecenter.org/give

2) *Mandatory IRA distributions.*

If you are 70½ years old, you can make a donation directly from your mandatory annual IRA distribution and avoid the income tax.

3) *Automatic monthly donations.*

Visit guesthousecenter.org/give to sign up.

4) *Join the Guest House Legacy Circle.*

Visit guesthousecenter.org/legacy for more details about naming Guest House in your estate plans.

5) *Stock donations*

Donate low-cost appreciated stock and avoid the tax on the gain.

6) *Commemorative gifts*

Donate in honor or in memory of someone and engrave a plaque for a brick in the labyrinth.

7) *In-kind donations.*

Make in-kind donations of items that Guest House needs.

8) *Room & board*

Elect to pay the higher rate for your room & board on your registration form – “pay it forward.”

9) *Pledges*

Make a multi-year pledge!

All donations are tax deductible and deeply appreciated.

Guest House EIN:
20-3692127

Earth Day 2026



Thank you to all our volunteers! Back row: Diana Berberich, Cate Nicklaus, Sydney Cash, Julie Cash, Noell Goldberg, Jill Berman, Barbara Houston, Lorelee Crowder, Melanie Quigley, Robyn Mierzwa, Jennifer Reaswell, Jacqueline Torres. Front row: Christine Marshall, Rich Kerrigan, Monique Morimoto, Marlena Reisman, Santa Holmes. Not pictured, Barney McGale.

One of the great satisfactions in life is the opportunity to express our love through our actions and to make visible what matters to us. Happily, Guest House is frequently the beneficiary of such care. Over the years, volunteers have gathered each spring to put in fences, plant ferns and daffodils and trees, clear invasive vines, prune shrubs, weed the labyrinth, set down stone paths, and create a shade garden. They've probably also spread at least a literal ton of mulch.

This event has happened almost every year since Guest House became the home of the Diamond Approach on the East Coast. And this year, once again, on a beautiful spring weekend, a group of



volunteers gathered at Guest House to get their hands dirty.

Fifteen volunteers spread 250 bags of mulch, weeded, pruned, and moved plants. Participants made new friends, shared meals, aspirin, sunscreen, and bug spray. They enjoyed the satisfaction of seeing the grounds come to life again with the look that only care can bring.



Thank you to everyone who participated, and to the Guest House staff for hosting with such appreciation and attention to what was needed to make the day a success for all. 🌸



Motherless Daughters

hopeedelman.com/retreats-2026

THE BOOK AND COMMUNITY THAT TRANSFORMED MY GRIEF

By Saralyn Pratt, GH Executive Director

For years, I couldn't quite name what was wrong. I just knew that grief had shaped me in ways I didn't fully understand – quietly influencing my relationships, decisions and sense of self. Then I discovered Hope Edelman's book *Motherless Daughters*, and something shifted. Reading her words, I finally felt seen. She gave language to an experience I had carried alone for so long – the particular, lasting impact of losing my mother at a young age.

But the support I felt didn't stop at the page. Attending a *Motherless Daughters* retreat brought an even greater understanding for me, surrounded by women who truly "got it." The weekend was transformative. For the first time, I didn't have to explain myself.

The isolating grief became something shared, and in sharing it I felt lighter. I left with a clarity I hadn't known was possible and a peace I hadn't dared hope for.

What I didn't expect was how lasting the connections would be. I still stay in touch with women from my group and our reunions every couple of years remain a vital lifeline. Hope Edelman didn't just write a book; she built a community that makes a difference.



Lesley Lynne Burdin Pratt, ca. 1959



Saralyn Pratt, ca. 1969

Community Leadership Program

clpnewhaven.org

Over the past decade, Guest House has hosted retreats for the Community Leadership Program (CLP). CLP is centered in the greater New Haven area and empowers leaders through candid dialogue and collaborative experiences exploring and practicing becoming the leaders they aspire to be. These retreats support an experiential learning program, gathering individuals committed to being adaptive, responsive, curious and—above all—leading courageously with their most deeply held values.



CLP's inspiring online journal, *The Circle* (<https://clpnewhaven.org/home/the-circle/>), is a virtual leadership circle for everyone building inclusive, compassionate, just, healthy, thriving communities. It supports inspiration, learning, reflection, listening and connection.

Art & Wellness

kimberlyheil.com

Kimberly Heil, Board Certified Art therapist and Intuitive Artist, and Lauri Ingram, Spiritual Transformation Coach and Crystal Dreaming Practitioner/Teacher facilitate creative wellness retreats combining spirituality, mindfulness, and expressive arts. Each retreat is a sacred container for transformation.

Here are some examples of art created while at Guest House!



Cricket Island Foundation

cricketisland.org



Cricket Island Foundation’s mission is to develop the capacity and commitment of young people to improve their lives and communities, as well as the world around them.

Guest House recently hosted CIF’s Annual Leadership Retreat, which convened leaders from youth-led social change organizations. Its intentional space allowed leaders to move beyond daily nonprofit management to engage in deep reflection and peer coaching. Together, they focused on three core goals:

- **Rest and Reset:** Providing space to soothe the nervous system and experience collective well-being.
- **Relationship Building:** Deepening authentic connections and purposeful solidarity across different grantee cohorts.
- **Wisdom Sharing:** Exchanging tools, strategies, and stories to facilitate easeful, healthy organizational transitions.



THE CRICKET ISLAND FOUNDATION



We are grateful to Guest House for providing the serene environment necessary to support the vision and resilience of these incredible leaders.

Constance Baker Motley Preserve

Get outside with a quick hike at the Constance Baker Motley Preserve! Spanning 7 acres bordering the Cockaponset State Forest, the Preserve sits at the former property of Judge Constance Baker Motley, a leader in the Civil Rights Movement and the nation’s first African-American & first woman to serve as a federal judge.

Directions: From Guest House, take a left out of the driveway onto CT-148 W/W Main street, and in 1.5 miles, take a left onto Cedar Lake Road. The Preserve will be on your right in a little over a mile. There is a small parking lot that fits 4-5 cars.



Forever Family Foundation

foreverfamilyfoundation.org

FFF provides a forum where those who have suffered the loss of a loved one can turn for support, information, and hope through state-of-the-art information and services provided by ongoing research into the survival of consciousness and Afterlife Science.

FFF started in 2003 and is an all-volunteer, global not-for-profit with 17,000 members in 76 countries. We host four Grief Retreats per year around the country, and Guest House remains our original and primary site. The retreats were even featured in the Netflix docuseries “Surviving Death” (still streaming), which filmed a complete retreat at Guest House.



"Angel Bonfire"

Our many presenters and practitioners bring comfort, hope, and meaning to the attendees. Sometimes amazing things happen, such as the ceremonial fire image. We witness profound transformations as attendees immersed in grief leave with a lightness and renewed purpose.

Guest House provides a soothing, comfortable and relaxed atmosphere. We look forward to coming back every year!


 WRITING A SONG THAT MATTERS
WITH
DAR WILLIAMS

darwilliamsretreat.com


Dar and her team of songwriters have held over 30 Writing A Song That Matters (WASTM) retreats and worked with more than 800 songwriters. The retreats provide songwriting workshops, vocal coaching, one-on-one song consultations with Dar, evening song sharing with the whole group, and collaborative songwriting opportunities.

Many retreatants have gone on to write that special song for a family member or partner, win awards, do their first gig or open mic, or record an album of their work.

Dar's mission statement IS the retreat name, and everything has grown organically from there. Dar's experience as a songwriter of note, her songwriting expertise, and her ability to explain her process so fluidly infuse the retreats with positivity and inspiration.

WASTM enjoys the various indoor and outdoor spaces at Guest House and is grateful for the attentive team and delicious food. The most common words that retreaters use to sum up the retreat on the last day are "transformative" and "magical." Songwriters connect in a deeply meaningful way and return year after year to this group which has often been compared to a family.

"I had never done a retreat before like this. I have been a musician my whole life and besides getting feedback from teachers and professors, never collaborated like this before. I was skeptical but a little hopeful going in. I am not a joiner, and now I have found my people. It is a very special place where people share their vulnerability through song. Everyone is kind and genuine." – J.

"This was a truly singular experience. Besides the valuable input on my material, getting to spend an entire week immersed in music making with such incredibly kind people is such an amazing thing. Any songwriter, no matter your level, will get something out of it." – R.



Shakshuka

Shakshuka was recently added to our menu and has become a fast favorite. This North African and Middle Eastern dish of eggs poached in a savory tomato sauce is a delight any time of day.



serves ~15 people

- extra virgin olive oil
- 1 onion, diced
- 1 red pepper, diced
- approx. a dozen eggs
- ~6 cups chopped tomatoes
- garlic, zested (4 cloves/to taste)
- spice with cumin (1/2 tbsp) and cayenne pepper (1/2 tsp), add a little sugar to balance the tomatoes

Sauté onion & red pepper.

Add spices & sugar.

Deglaze with chopped tomato.

Simmer ~20 min.

Crack eggs on top, cover with lid over med-low heat.

Garnish with cilantro/parsley.

Serve with crusty bread.

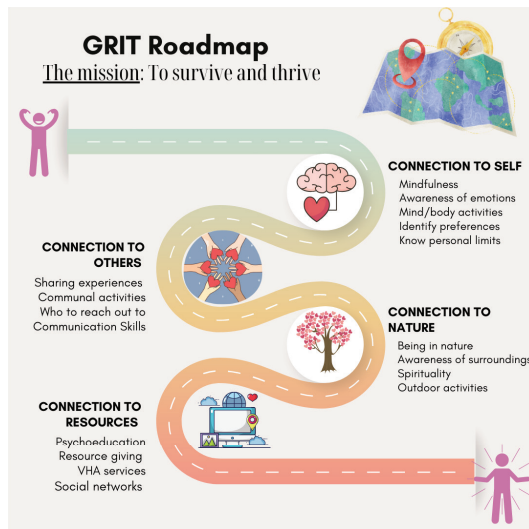
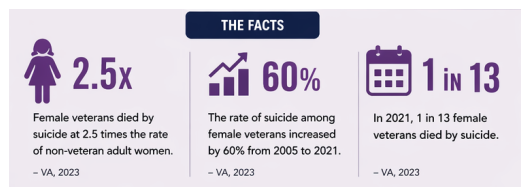
Enjoy! 🌸

VA CT Healthcare

va.gov/connecticut-health-care/

Growth, Resilience, Insight, and Togetherness (GRIT) is an innovative trauma-informed, retreat-based suicide prevention program for women Veterans who have experienced interpersonal violence. GRIT was designed to enhance connectedness through experiential learning in a nature-based setting. Programming includes clinician, community partner, and/or peer-facilitated activities, and skills-building. The discussion sessions target four domains of connectedness: to self, to others, to nature, and to resources. Attendees are encouraged to integrate acquired skills and resources into a GRIT Roadmap that can be used to guide them during and post-retreat with the goal of surviving and thriving with grit.

The responses of attendees about Guest House—the accommodations, meals, staff, and overall experience—have been overwhelmingly positive. We look forward to more opportunities to collaborate in the future!



A Place of Light

placeoflight.net

Since 2003, we have helped people understand and trust their intuitive ability as a natural and essential part of life. We believe that learning to trust it helps us navigate this energetically interconnected world with greater clarity and ease.



We see intuition as the way we read and perceive the energy of all things, and we recognize that all things are, at their core, energy. While modern quantum science describes matter in terms of energy, vibration, and waves, this understanding is not new. Indigenous cultures, Buddhist monks, and mystics across many traditions have long recognized this fundamental nature of our existence.



Guest House—with its cozy accommodations, wooded grounds, and commitment to healthy, local food—has been an outstanding location for us to support others in this work.

Transpersonal Healing

bluefeatherhealing.net

Transpersonal Healing Retreats, led by Carolyn Pare, Tammy McCollam, and Vanessa Heberger, focus on trauma, including topics such as codependency, shame release and inner child work. Healing modalities such as hypnotherapy and breathwork, balanced by playful activities—such as dancing under the moonlight at the labyrinth or a karaoke night—invite both deep healing and connection. The weekends also include spiritual experiences like guided meditation, chant, ecstatic dance, and oracle reading, for an overall holistic healing experience.



The Guest House atmosphere, with its country-inn charm and attentive staff, has helped participants feel safe and supported throughout the weekend. The amazing variety of food and the attention to detail from the kitchen staff also add to the participants' experience of being cared for and attended to. Overall, our experience with Guest House staff has been exceptional compared to other retreat centers. They offer support with everything from basic needs to detailed room setup or other service needs of the group.

RETREAT GROUP FEATURE

New England Songwriters Retreat

newenglandsongwritersretreat.com



A collection of our favorite master songwriters gather in Chester, CT to work with students who want to take a deep dive into the heart of their craft. We asked how GH related to their three-part mission: Inspiration, Community, and Learning.

WHO ARE THE PARTICIPANTS THAT COME TO GUEST HOUSE?

We have professional touring artists, retirees who are returning to the craft, very promising emerging artists who we find and recruit, and wide-eyed beginners taking a leap of faith who have never written a song at all.

HOW HAS YOUR MISSION/PURPOSE BEEN PUSHED FORWARD BY HOLDING EVENTS AT GH?

Guest House has been an easy place to grow into—knowing that everything is high quality: the food, the staff, and the environment. It allows us to focus on the attendees, while trusting the rest to the Guest House’s capable hands.

HOW DOES GUEST HOUSE COMPARE TO OTHER RETREAT CENTERS YOU HOLD EVENTS AT?

We can’t imagine a more perfect venue than Guest House. The personal touch, the warm friendliness of the staff, not to mention the delicious food, is everything to us. The very comfortable surroundings and warm welcoming spaces have allowed us to focus on the work of songwriting.

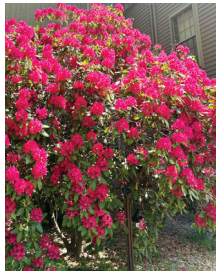


RETREAT GROUP FEATURE

Diamond Approach

diamondapproach.org

The Diamond Approach (DA) is a spiritual school with its own dedicated centers in Berkeley, CA and Boulder, CO. Guest House is the Diamond Approach home on the East Coast, and its board of directors are all students or teachers in the school. DA is a spiritual path toward deep realization of our essential nature and what it means to be human. Board meetings and projects are conducted with DA principles in mind and heart. Though the staff are not DA students, they embody such DA values as open-mindedness,



compassion, sensitivity, willingness to explore what is possible, and our common humanity. How Guest House functions is, in a way, a manifestation of the Diamond Approach in the

world. And the guest groups that come here, like those profiled in this issue and many more, all contribute to and enrich the essence of Guest House herself. This in turn affects all of the East Coast DA groups that hold multiple retreats here every year, for GH both supports and is a product of all of the myriad, healing, inspiring work that is done here by every person who comes through her doors.



RETREAT GROUP FEATURE

Yale Prison Education Initiative

yaleprisoneducationinitiative.org

The Yale Prison Education Initiative (YPEI) at Dwight Hall in partnership with the University of New Haven expands the boundaries of access to higher education by offering rigorous, accredited college programming to incarcerated students across Connecticut. Together we are redefining what is possible in justice-impacted communities—advancing equity, igniting intellectual possibility, and cultivating the human dignity, leadership, and transformative potential of all people through education.



YPEI has hosted community and staff retreats since 2022.

Each visit has provided rest, relaxation, and the opportunity to come together, remember our mission, be reinvigorated, and imagine new ways in which we can better support our community. Thank you, Marianne, Ben, and Charlie, and all the individuals who make Guest House our home away from home.

Yale
Prison
Education
Initiative

AT DWIGHT HALL AT YALE

Friends of Guest House 2025 Honor Roll

Thank you all!

Amy Abelow
AH Almaas
Sherry Anderson
Jorge Arango
Paula Backus
Robert Ball
Jill Berman
Matthew Brannagan
Diana Brennan
Jane Bronson
Byron Brown
Tabor Butler
Carol Carbon
Nick Carter
Betts Cassady
Jeff Charno
Lauraine Chestnut
Nancy Closs
Dorothy Cochrane & Michael Bower
Jeff Collins
Ken Crocker
Daphne Cruze-Zug
Ralph Curcuru
Ann Diller
Kip Dooley
Amelia Eakins
Catherine Errico
John Ferullo
Judith Flanders
Lauren Garnier
William Gibbons
Noell Goldberg
Ben Goldman
Eduardo Gomez
Anne Gottlieb
Parvati Grais & Cory Greenberg

Margaret Hixon
Barbara Houston
Diane Ingram
Nancy Joly
Penelope Keyl
Tammy Kirby
Tracy Kirshenbaum
Carolyn Lamson
Michael Landgarten
Anne Laney
Helaine Lasky
Laurie Leonard
Michael Levien
Isabelle Lorans
Vern Ludwig
Zarina Maiwandi
Nicola Maloney
Gregory Marchini
Christine Marshall
Cynthia Martin
Melanie Michaels
Meg Miller
Lindsey Miranda
Monique Morimoto
Mollie Muenzen
Suzanne Noble
Melissa Nuwaysir & William Walls
Jerry & Mary Ann O'Halloran
Kostas Oikonomou
Wendy Osborn
Mercedes Pacheco & Gregory Knight
Marielee Perez
Hadley Perry
Robin Rawls
Marlene Reisman
Gloria Richards

Donna Ries
Andrea Rivers
Barbara Rosen
Michael Rosetta
Richard Rowley
Monika Rutishauser
Diane Sacks
Terry Saracino & Paul Strasburg
David Schulz
Amalea Seelig
Josie Sentner
Beth Shapiro
Anne Singer
David Slade
Henry Stindt
Debbie Treat
Sarah Tremaine
Olaf Unsoeld
Meg Vandergon
Peter Vandermark
Deborah Vilcheck
Ann Viviano
Cary & David Walker
Jay Walsh
Avie Waters
Barada Weisbrot
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