The Mountain Hermitage - Sharing the Vision

The first time I was invited to teach in Israel, some students took me to the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem after the retreat. I stood there silently as ancient history and current suffering flowed in a single stream through my heart and mind. Then I tore a piece of paper from my note pad and wrote down my intention for a small long-term practice center to come to fruition in the mountains of New Mexico. I folded the paper into a tiny bundle and stuck it into one of the cracks in the wall, along with thousands of tiny bundles of hopes, dreams, reminiscences, loves, forgivenesses, etc., that have been tucked into the Wailing Wall's cracks over countless time.

Seven years later, in a world still full of suffering, the vision of that moment is as bright, clear, and powerful as it was then, and I know that with dedication and effort The Mountain Hermitage here in the mountains of Taos, New Mexico can become reality. This past Spring I had another personal experience that strengthened my resolve. I joined a group of fellow Dharma teachers for a month of silent retreat practice at The Forest Refuge in Barre, MA, and then stayed on for another month to sit with my Burmese teacher Sayadaw U Pandita. This Fall I returned again to The Forest Refuge, this time to teach.

Practicing and teaching in a place so wisely created to support long term practice for those ready to enrich their meditation practice in this way was a profound gift to me. I personally experienced the vision in action every day, and it moved me deeply. I returned to Taos ready to take up the work of The Mountain Hermitage with renewed energy and determination.

It has begun to happen. The Mountain Hermitage Board of Directors and our extended family of friends and supporters have joined together to take the first strong steps toward making The Mountain Hermitage the uniquely beautiful place of shared vision it will one day be. Each person who comes to these pristine northern New Mexico mountains to practice at The Mountain Hermitage will be honored and supported in their quest to awaken to the deepest truths and to manifest these truths in their daily lives. The Mountain Hermitage will nurture peace of mind, lovingkindness, compassion and wisdom in the hearts and minds of those who come to practice here. This world needs more people who have a wise and compassionate spiritual maturity. The Mountain Hermitage will provide the space and support for this maturity to grow and blossom.

Thank you all for your interest and support of The Mountain Hermitage.

With metta,

Marcia Rose
Resident Guiding Teacher, TMH

May the merit of our actions serve the welfare and liberation of all beings.

Meet Our Resident Teacher …

Marcia Rose lives in Taos, NM, and is the resident guiding teacher for The Mountain Hermitage and Taos Mountain Sangha Meditation Center. She has been studying and practicing the Buddha’s teachings and meditation with Asian and Western teachers of various traditions since 1970. Her own teaching reflects a strong influence from the Burmese Mahasi Vipassana tradition of Sayadaw U Pandita, and in more recent years also from the Tibetan Dzogchen tradition. Marcia was the resident teacher for staff at the Insight Meditation Society in Barre, MA, from 1991 to 1993. She has been one of the teachers for the annual three month retreat at IMS and has been invited to be a visiting teacher at The Forest Refuge in Barre, MA, for a few months during 2003-2004. Marcia also teaches Vipassana and Metta retreats in other U.S. venues and internationally.

"Peace in the world begins with peace in our own minds. Wise and compassionate action in the world arises from wisdom and compassion within ourselves. The Mountain Hermitage will help water and nurture the seeds of peace, wisdom and compassion for those who practice there, cultivating the intention to benefit all."

-- Joseph Goldstein

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What Difference Does It Make?

When asked how the meditation practice of one person can make a difference, many Buddhists recall the story of the third-century BCE King Ashoka, a Mauryan king who conquered what was then India through merciless warfare. After a particularly gory battle, even Ashoka was filled with remorse as he walked across the battlefield. He saw one living being, a monk, and struck by his equanimity asked the monk about his spiritual practice. The answer so inspired Ashoka that he established an empire based on nonviolence and spread the teachings of the Buddha throughout the land.

The gift of the Dharma – the teachings of the truth excels all gifts.

— The Buddha/The Dhammapada

In the millennia since, many people’s lives have been changed in large and small ways by the Dharma. And each person whose life has been touched has affected the lives of many others. A dramatic example of this ripple effect can be seen in the life of Jean Smith, who was once a corporate executive, but after moving to a Manhattan office building and using recycled paper for textbooks, switched to HIV-positive to eliminating the use of Styrofoam cups in a practice until her 40s. While a prominent publishing executive, Smith has now published seven books on Buddhism (most recently The Beginner’s Guide to Walking the Buddha’s Eightfold Path) and has now touched the lives of hundreds of thousands of people. Jean Smith answered so inspired Ashoka that he established an empire based on nonviolence and spread the teachings of the Buddha throughout the land. She invited you to join this vision by offering whatever financial support you can, however large or small. Please consider joining our spiritual community through a great and worthy act, the practice of generosity – the profound and sacred practice of Dana as taught by the Buddha. All donations in any form are welcomed and deeply appreciated.

If being given, as I know, the benefits of generosity, they would not let an opportunity go by without giving and sharing.

— The Buddha

Opportunities for Giving

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<tr>
<th>Gift Range</th>
<th>Number of Gifts</th>
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<tr>
<td>Bodhisattva Level</td>
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<td>Deva Level</td>
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In general, 90% of a development campaign goal comes from 20% of the prospects. The rule of thumb calls for at least four qualified prospects for each lead gift. Based on the gift table above, TMH will need to cultivate a pool of at least 132 prospects in order to solicit the lead gifts necessary to meet its $2,000,000 campaign goal.

Where We Stand

Campaign Planning Study Measures

Challenge Against Conviction

Believe. Support. Succeed. Those three calls to action are the final words of the 23-page TMH Campaign Planning Study commissioned in the fall of 2002, developed by New York City consultant Sarah L. Holland, and presented to the TMH Board at its November meeting.

The study addresses the fundamental challenge: How can The Mountain Hermitage raise $2,000,000 in philanthropic funds from its actual and potential constituencies over three years? Conclusions and recommendations were developed from the informed replies of thirteen carefully chosen respondents to questions exploring the eight critical elements of the development campaign.

The study defined three critical phases in the three-year plan, beginning with a nine to twelve month pre-campaign period, launched with the November meeting, that will make or break for TMH. As the Board implements and evaluates the results from a cluster of strategies prescribed in the campaign planning study, it will know if it can generate enough support (two or more lead gifts) to move the project into the second phase.

If that formidable challenge is met, TMH moves to a one-year nucleus fund phase, aiming to secure 40 to 50 per cent of the total $2,000,000 campaign goal. Only when these funds are committed can the campaign be “publicly” announced. At this point all other prospects are solicited, and if all goes well, the balance required to achieve the $2,000,000 goal will be secured, giving TMH the green light to begin development of its physical plant.

The study spells out many challenges facing the development team, among them the number of Vaughans and retreat centers already in existence in northern New Mexico, creating both a hospitable environment for Buddhist ventures and stiff competition for what is seen as a small pool of philanthropic dollars.

As the Board faces this and other challenges in developing major sources of funding for TMH, great dedication, strong belief, and personal sacrifice will be required of many supporters. But overriding the challenges, however great, is the shared and powerful conviction that each passing day in this troubled century brings greater relevance – and urgency – to the vision for The Mountain Hermitage. This is truly a project that can change the world.