

Clear Mind

Howard Cohn Returns to Madison October 3-6

Howard Cohn will lead our next residential retreat. In 1995, Howie was the first teacher we ever brought to lead a retreat, and we have been fortunate to have him return almost every year since then. Please see the insert in this newsletter for details on registration and a brief article by Howie. Get your registration form in early in order to be certain of a spot. If you have questions regarding the retreat you can call Tony at 661-9959 or email at tony.fernandez1@juno.com

Daylong Retreat

September 14, 9AM – 6PM

Over the last year, Pat Nichols and Linda Wuestenburg determined to build a meditation hall on land they own in the country, about 1 hour outside of Madison. This space is now finished and they have begun to use it to offer practice opportunities. On September 14, Cindy McCallum will lead a day of practice followed by a pot luck dinner in the new hall. This retreat offers a wonderful opportunity to support and deepen one's practice and connect with other meditators. The retreat is being offered on a dana basis. All dana (generosity) offerings will go to support the cost of building the meditation space. Call Cindy to register and get directions or with any questions: (608)255-4559.

Prison Correspondence Project Continues

A group from the Madison Insight Meditation Sunday night sitting has begun responding to letters that incarcerated persons have sent to Abhayagiri Buddhist Monastery. The Monastery sends prisoners free Buddhist books and then forwards the letter on to us for reply. We've begun to receive more letters and to have ongoing exchanges with prisoners. We could use more people in our group so that we can get the responses out more quickly. If you are interested in joining this project, please contact Jan Sheppard at 233-3844.

Eco-Spirituality Leaders to Visit Madison

Michael Dowd and Connie Barlow are national leaders in the eco-spirituality movement. From September 7 - 23, they will be appearing in numerous venues in Madison. For details on all of their speaking engagements, contact Dave Creswell, 274-8938 or Winton Boyd, 271-7212.

On Sunday Sept. 8, they will be leading the discussion at the regular Sunday night meditation for Madison Insight Meditation Group, 6-8pm, Lower Meeting House, First Unitarian Society, 900 University Bay Drive, Madison, WI.

The topic of their talk will be "*The Epic of Evolution and the Dharma*." Harvard biologist, Edward O. Wilson, has called the 13 billion year creation story unfolding from modern science "probably the best myth we will ever have." Michael and Connie will discuss how the mythic themes of this story reinforce our dharma practice. More information about Michael and Connie can be found at www.thegreatstory.org

Highway Cleanup Project

Members of the Madison Insight Meditation Group have partnered with Snowflower Sangha (a local sitting group based on Thich Nhat Hahn's teachings) to periodically pick up litter on a section of highway near Mt. Vernon. The next clean up day will be in October, on either the 12th or the 26th. It is easy work, in great company, for a couple hours, followed by a sack lunch picnic at Dane County's newest county park. This project offers a chance for selfless service and to meet and get to know fellow dharma practitioners. Snowflower is a wonderful group of people and October is a great time of year to be outside. If interested, please contact Dave Creswell at 274-8938 or dcres0@hotmail.com to get the final date and additional details about the day.

Fall Half Day Sits

Our next half day sits will be on Saturday, October 19 and on Saturday, December 7. They begin at 9 AM and go until 12 PM, followed by a potluck lunch. You can join the sitting, on the hour, at any point during the morning. More details are on our webpage at www.vipassana.net or call 274-8938 to confirm that these dates have not changed.

Meditation Classes in Madison

This fall there will be two six-week Introduction to Meditation classes offered. Cindy McCallum and John Meyer will each offer a class, see below for the specifics on day of the week, dates and location. The classes will provide an overview of the basic practices and concepts of Insight Meditation and are suited for beginning meditators or those with experience who would like support for having a daily practice.

Mondays, Sept. 16 – Oct. 21, 2002

7:00 – 9:00 PM

Downtown MATC (Madison Area Technical College)

Taught by Cindy McCallum

For information call Cindy at (608) 255-4559.

To register call: (608) 246-6420, and ask for course #29428, cost is \$34.90

Deadline to register is September 3, 2002

Tuesdays, Oct. 1 – Nov. 5, 2002

7:00 – 9:00 PM

Edgewood College

Taught by John Meyer

For information call John at (608) 238-0275.

To register call: (608) 663-2270.

IRS Grants 501(c)(3) Status

Madison Vipassana, Inc.'s application to the IRS for recognition as a not-for-profit organization under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code has been granted. This is exciting news! It means that donations made to our organization beginning in 2002 are eligible for treatment as a charitable deduction on the donor's individual income tax return. The recognition also clarifies the organization's tax status so that we can be assured that any income we receive from retreats is not subject to income tax. We don't seek to make any money on the retreats, but sometimes we do end up taking in more than our expenses when the number of people attending a retreat is larger than we anticipated. Any money beyond what is needed for retreat expenses is transferred to the scholarship fund.

This recognition of nonprofit status has been several years in the making. First, a group of us discussed whether seeking nonprofit status was something we wanted to pursue. Then we had to consult with a lawyer and accountant and prepare articles of incorporation and bylaws to gain recognition as a corporation from the State of Wisconsin. Finally,

there was a lengthy application to fill out for the IRS. Many people devoted many hours over several years to this enterprise including: Laura Berger, Lori Creswell, Cindy McCallum, David Mays, John Meyer and Jan Sheppard. Thanks to them, and congratulations to all of us!

Vipassana.net

By John Cotter

With this newsletter we introduce a column devoted to the "online" resources available to the Madison Vipassana community. In each column we will explore some aspect of the Internet that (hopefully) is of interest to our community. (Remember that we have a web page with valuable links and community information at www.vipassana.net)

We will start off by talking about the Madison Vipassana, Inc. mailing list. Not the mailing list for this newsletter, but the email list that is the online counterpart.

Some of you are already aware that an email list exists through Yahoo! Groups. This list is primarily used to communicate news such as upcoming retreats, visiting speakers, half-day sittings, schedule changes, etc.

Even though we have been collecting email addresses when people sign-up to be on the newsletter mailing list, we do not automatically add you to the email list. If you are interested in being connected via an email list, we ask that you sign up. This article is to help you understand how to do that.

The email listserv we use is hosted through Yahoo! Groups. To sign-up to be on the Madison Vipassana email list is quite simple.

Just send an empty email message to:

mimg-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

You will get an auto-reply message back asking if you really want to subscribe to the MIMG mailing list (this prevents someone from subscribing you by "spoofing your address") You must reply to this message before you are actually added to the mailing list. That's all there is to it.

Posting a message to the list is also easy. Be aware that the list is "moderated" which means all messages must be approved before they are forwarded to the entire group. To post to the list compose your message and send it to:

mimg@yahoogroups.com

Once it's approved it will be delivered to everyone currently on the list.

If you are already on the email list and wish to leave it's just as simple as signing up. Just send an empty message to:

mimg-unsubscribe@yahoogroups.com

You will get an auto-reply message back asking if you really want to leave the MIMG mailing list. You must reply to this message before you are actually removed from the mailing list.

Actually there are additional features available because Yahoo! Groups provides a web page with various tools available for each mailing list it hosts. These include a calendar to set up reminders to be mailed to the list, a place to store documents and pictures, a list of members, etc. If all you want to do is receive messages from the list you don't need to be concerned with this aspect of the mailing list. In fact, we won't cover this in-depth until the next column.

Until next time, happy surfing

Training the Heart Through Spiritual Friendship

by Jan Sheppard

From June 28th to July 2nd, 2002, I was blessed to be at Abhayagiri Sangha as one of eleven participants in CALM (Community of Abhayagiri Lay Ministers). We gathered at the monastery for the second retreat of our four year CALM program. Two participants were unable to attend but continue to be involved. The program began late in 2000 and this initial period of time was meant to be probationary, to give both the Abhayagiri Sangha and participants an opportunity to see if it was something we wanted to continue. The participants were especially pleased to learn that Ajahn Sumedho and the Amaravati Council of Elders had given their unanimous support and expressed commitment to the continuation of the program through its completion in July 2004.

The following members of the Abhayagiri Sangha have been regular participants: Ajahn Pasanno, Ajahn Amaro, Ajahn Sundara, Ajahn Jitindriya, Tan Karunadhammo, Tan Jotipalo, Tan Phasuko, Tan Dhammaso, Samanera Obhaso, Anagarika Leif, Anagarika Chris, and Debbie Stamp.

The lay participants in the program are: Taraniya (Gloria Ambrosia), North Carolina; Jim Cameron, Florida; Dennis Crean; California; Kathryn Guta; California; Shirley Johannesen, British Columbia, Canada; Jaya Karlson, Massachusetts, Kondanna (Barry Kapke); California; Sakula (Mary Reinard), Oregon; Santideva (Fred Kral), California; Mettika (Cindy Hoffman), California; and Janice Sheppard, Wisconsin.

As lay participants we share a commitment to being of service to the Abhayagiri Sangha. More generally, we are seeking to deepen our own understanding of the Buddha's teachings of Dhamma/Vinaya and our grounding in the Thai forest tradition of Ajahn Chah. We are united in our appreciation for the truth of the Dhamma and the beauty and simplicity of the monastic form. We aspire to be of help in allowing this tradition to grow and flourish in the west.

From January-July of 2002, CALM met weekly to discuss and consider assigned readings. Those who could, attended at the monastery. Those, like me, who were distant or unable to get to the monastery, were provided with taped copies of the hour and a half sessions. The first three months focused on readings having to do with breath meditation, and the second three months on readings on the first foundation of mindfulness; awareness of the body. In addition to the academic study (scholarly examination of suttas and appropriate readings), in each three-month period we examined specific aspects of meditation, ritual/ceremonial aspects of

Theravada Buddhism, and social issues of our time. The plan is that in addition to the ongoing study, we will gather for a retreat each January and July until July 2004.

The June retreat was filled with warm feelings of connection and a lovely sense of caring spiritual friendship. This tone was set in our first session, which was a blessing ceremony. One of our participants, Dennis Crean, has just purchased a house across the street and 1 mile up a hill from the monastery, and so our first official activity together was a blessing ceremony for Dennis's new house. Two of us had helped Dennis clean and arrange flowers to set up a beautiful shrine for the ceremony. Seven monastics and the CALM participants fit into Dennis's living room for the blessing. Ajahn Pasanno and Ajahn Amaro used this opportunity to give us instructions on offering a blessing ceremony.

As part of the retreat we reviewed the program and decided that the curriculum was excellent, but that meeting every week was too much if we were to keep up with the assignments. For the next two three-month sessions we will meet every other week for 2 hours. We decided that we would figure out a way for those who are at a distance to contribute, either by teleconference or video or audio taped presentations. From July until the New Year, we will be reading on insight and the feminine in the Buddhist world, and on kamma and the realm of feeling.

Some of the highlights of the weekend included a talk on the Anattalakkhana Sutta and an evening dhamma talk by Ajahn Sucitto; an overview of the Pali Cannon by Ajahn Amaro which included a 'hands on' exercise to practice locating and searching in various published versions of scripture; and a fascinating session led by Ajahn Pasanno and Ajahn Amaro on ceremony. Much to the amazement of almost all of us, we spent most of the 'ceremony' session on the fine points of bowing and we were disappointed when it was suddenly time for tea with many questions and comments left unsaid. The emotional highpoint of the retreat was at the end when Ajahn Passano, Ajahn Amaro, and Ajahn Sucitto led us in a blessing (paritta) and commitment ceremony. Following paritta chanting, each participant made a personal statement of commitment to participate fully and to complete the training to the best of his or her ability. Suffused with blessings and surrounded by large and happy smiles from all present, each lay participant then received a gift of a Thai medallion honoring Ajahn Mun.

In a state of fullness, six of us from the CALM program proceeded to attend the Community Dharma Leader (CDL) training sponsored by Spirit Rock Meditation Center from July 2-7. This program pulls together individuals who are active in meditation groups or dhamma activities from across the United States and Canada. The CDL program is a 2 ½ year program. This was the third retreat. I'll attend two more, one in January 2003 and the program will end in July 2003. This is the second CDL training so we are known as CDL2. Cindy McCallum was a participant in CDL1 and has continued to attend their periodic reunions. Cindy also just attended a CDL1 gathering on dependent origination at the Barre Center for Buddhist Studies in Barre, MA.

This gathering of our CDL2 had 66 participants, but despite the large size, we have come to know one another during our three retreats together. Our CDL program has chosen to spend much of our time considering issues of diversity – ethnic and racial diversity in the world, diversity among ourselves, how to serve and attract diverse participants to our dhamma communities, and how to take our knowledge and skills into settings outside of the meditation

hall.

James Baraz (who is a Spirit Rock teacher and who will be leading a retreat for us here in Madison in summer 2003), is the facilitator and organizer of the CDL program. James has been key in allowing our community to develop its own interests and shape our direction based our feedback to him. He's also provided ongoing teaching to us on what it means to be leaders in our communities and generously shared his own experience and the wisdom he's gained from many years of teaching meditation and leading a sitting group. Ajahn Amaro, of Abhayagiri monastery, has been able to attend most of the three CDL sessions and has been a wonderful asset to help keep us grounded and connected to the Buddha's teachings. This time he presented an overview and historical perspective of the Thai Forest Tradition, the tradition that Jack Kornfield, Spirit Rock's founder ordained in. We were also blessed to have George Mumford present and teaching for several days. George has studied with Larry Rosenberg and Joseph Goldstein, among others, and has been a spiritual advisor to the LA Lakers for a number of years. He has a gift for communicating the power of the teachings to people in many different settings, (athletes, prisoners, corporate CEO's), and the ability to share its essence without getting caught in terminology. If you ever have an opportunity to hear him speak, I'd strongly encourage you to take it. His own life and his presence is an amazing demonstration of the power and truth of the Buddha's path.

In addition we heard from teachers on women's and gender issues and on 'spiritual emergencies' and how those who've

experienced trauma might react in a meditation retreat and how to be of assistance to them. Also, our diversity committee had organized two half day sessions, one involved small group sharing of our own cultural heritage and one was an experiential game, which we played and then processed as a large group. I hope this summary can give some indication of the incredible intensity of the days we spent together. Processing issues that involve great suffering and anger in a group committed to kindness and safety was a rare and powerful experience.

By the end of these two retreats, verse 328 of the Dhammapada seemed written just for me:

*If you find an intelligent companion
who will walk with you,
who lives wisely, soberly, overcoming all dangers,
walk with that person in joy and thoughtfulness.*

(S. Beck translation – www.edepot.com/dhamma3.html).

Clear Mind: the Newsletter of Madison Vipassana, Inc., Madison, Wisconsin

This newsletter is published periodically throughout the year to inform our members of our activities and of events of interest to the Vipassana community. Much of this information is also published on our website at: <http://www.vipassana.net>

Jan Sheppard: Editing, Layout & Design.

To be added to the mailing list contact Jan at 608-233-3844 or email uppekha@yahoo.com



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