

**Laughing Rivers Sangha**  
**2010 Committee Reports for Annual Meeting**

Dear Friends,

Written below are the Laughing Rivers Sangha committee reports for 2010. This is to update everyone in the sangha about the activities that have been occurring throughout the year by each committee. If you have any questions/concerns/ideas regarding any of these activities please contact the person/people involved with that particular committee or activity. The Continuing Care Committee (Jennifer Whiteside, Martha O'Grady, Pat Cassidy, and Dennis Ondek) had met every other month this year. Notes from each of these meetings have been sent out on the listserve, and can be provided to anyone who did not receive these notes.

With a bow,

Jen Whiteside ([acupuncturejen@yahoo.com](mailto:acupuncturejen@yahoo.com))

**Sangha Structure**

Our Sangha family members, like members of all families, communicate among themselves and work together to make decisions that benefit the Sangha. At Laughing Rivers Sangha, we are committed to communicate and make decisions in a transparent way, giving opportunities to all of our family to participate fully. We have developed a method for doing so that we describe here. Once a year, all Sangha members are invited to a meeting to identify the directions and priorities of our Sangha. At this meeting, members who wish to commit to carry out these priorities and commit to attend monthly meetings are invited to join the Continuing Care Committee (CCC).

The CCC discusses these priorities, chooses actions to carry them out, refers issues to committees, and receives updates and reports from committees such as the Retreat Committee. We try to do our business without re-discussing items that other committees have already discussed. We trust our sisters and brothers to make sound decisions. All CCC members and all Sangha members are invited to communicate directly with committees, participate in their discussions, or join them.

In addition to the Retreat Committees (Volunteers sought for each retreat), which organizes two retreats a year for the Sangha, our Sangha has organized the Member Care Group (Deborah Brooks, Convener), the Library Committee (David Bajada, Convener), the Finance Committee (Lee Bash, Tony Silvestre, Deborah Brooks), the CD Committee (Denys Candy, Convener), the OI Mentoring Coordinators ("Red" Patricia Redshaw and Deborah Brooks) and Day of Mindfulness organization (Pat Cassidy, Scheduler). Members also participate in the Sangha by taking responsibility for a number of other ongoing activities. These include organizing Set up and Close up on Tuesday Nights ( Dawn Lehman, Kate Fissel, Patrick Cassidy), leading on Tuesday Nights (coordinated at the Sangha's Annual Meeting), hosting

Sangha Socials (Volunteers), managing members' subscriptions to the email List serve Dawn Lehman), handling the Snail Mail List (Tony Silvestre), conducting Orientation for Visitors and New Members (Patricia Redshaw and Deborah Brooks), serving as Sangha Contact People (Deborah Brooks), and managing our website Bill Meoni.

All people participating in our Sangha are invited to participate in the conversations and decision-making discussions of our Sangha by communicating directly with those involved in some aspect of our process, described above, or by joining any of the groups or committees of our Sangha. We can learn how to practice mindfulness in all circumstances of our lives. Participating in Sangha Building with our sisters and brothers of Laughing Rivers Sangha is a wonderful way to practice mindful discussion, letting go of views, showing compassion, and increasing our understanding. We hope that each member of the Sangha who wishes can join us in this joyful activity.

-Tony Silvestre ([tonys@pitt.edu](mailto:tonys@pitt.edu))

### **Member Care Committee Report**

There are currently 6 people who participate in the member care group: Deborah, Dennis O, Laura, Rebecca, Red, David and Bill. Dennis will be leaving the group in November and Red and David have asked to be excused from most meetings due to time constraints, so the groups will probably be discussing recruiting new members, preferably people who are a little newer to the sangha. The facilitators rotate in this group and we schedule meetings quarterly. Our newest initiative the past year has been to start a Second Body program, which is in its first "quarter". Second Body practice is a form of partner practice. It allows sangha members to form deeper connections and offer support to another person in the sangha. Participation is voluntary, and on this first occasion of our practicing it, about 12 people have chosen to participate.

We continue to support the monthly sangha social time (first Tuesday of the month) through David's solicitations of food and drink and through email reminders to the listserv. David has also begun emailing core members asking them to volunteer to welcome new people, as part of our ongoing priority of making sure that new visitors are made to feel welcomed and integrated. The group also meets briefly quarterly before the sittings to review an informal list of sangha members and to make sure that people who may need some care or attention from the sangha are contacted.

-Deborah Brooks, [dleebrooks@gmail.com](mailto:dleebrooks@gmail.com)

### **Order of Interbeing Aspirant Training Program**

Dear friends,

We currently have five aspirants in the LRS OI training program: Natalie Neal, Laura Langer, David Bajada, Bill Meoni, and Michael Sutherland. Bill Meoni has written his letter to Thay requesting ordination, and hopes to receive the transmission of the trainings within the next year.

Our OI members and aspirants have recently undertaken a 4-year program of study that follows a curriculum developed by Chan Huy. The curriculum serves both as a training program for aspirants, and an opportunity for OI members to continue their study and deepen their understanding of the teachings. We have a schedule for the coming year through September 2011 and are meeting as a group on a monthly basis for ongoing study, dharma discussion, recitation of the trainings, and to support each other in our practice and aspirations. New aspirants will be able to integrate into the program at any time.

In the coming months, Deborah and Red plan to explore and develop tools that would support a “pre-aspirant” period for sangha members interested in OI aspirancy. We envision this as a process that would invite potential aspirants to look deeply at their motivation for becoming an aspirant and explore what it means to them personally to consider becoming a member of the Order of Interbeing.

With a bow,

Red and Deborah, ([predshaw@zoominternet.net](mailto:predshaw@zoominternet.net),  
[dleebrooks@gmail.com](mailto:dleebrooks@gmail.com))

### **Study Group Report**

We have been continuing to meet fairly regularly on the second and fourth Friday of every month. Over the past year we initially had an ad-hoc format where each attendee would propose a topic and then present it for discussion, and provide relevant readings, etc. Over the past six months or so, we have been reading and discussing sections or chapters from “The World We Have”, Thay’s book on environmentalism. Given that Dennis as a leader/convener of this group is leaving, the core members of the group: Mike M., Natalie, Fran, Dawn, Jen, Neil, wish to continue this practice for ourselves and interested members of the Sangha. For the time being, I will be coordinating which of us will be hosting the group via email, and then informing the rest of the Sangha, via listserv. There is no current decision among us whether we should continue in selecting venues in this way, or select a permanent host.

- Mike Milberger ([jmm54@verizon.net](mailto:jmm54@verizon.net))

### **Library Report**

The Sangha makes available to all of its practioners the opportunity to take out books or magazines related to our meditation practices; it includes a large selection of books by our teacher, Thich Nhat Hanh, and by other teachers in the meditation field;

Our library is there for the education and enlightenment of all who use it; those who borrow from the library are asked to fill our an index card indicating which books/mags have been taken out so the library can keep track of its inventory. The library is a treasure of knowledge and reminders for how we can live more happily. We invite all of our users to enjoy and make use of this opportunity to grow.

-David Bajada ([dbajada@handtechisp.net](mailto:dbajada@handtechisp.net))

### **Retreat Committee**

The Fall 2010 Retreat Committee formed in August at the request of the CCC. The committee members are Bill Meoni (Chair), Katie Holtz, Laura Langer, David Bajada and Mike Milberger. The committee decided on the theme: *Practicing Deep Listening and Loving Speech*. A decision was made to bring back the bookstore, raise the retreat price by \$10, and to grant scholarships to any Sangha members that requested. Bill and Laura served as the registrars and Mike organized and ran the bookstore. The retreat was well attended with the lowest attendance being on Thursday (19 retreatants) and the highest on Saturday (35 retreatants). The retreat financial summary is as follows:

|                   |           |
|-------------------|-----------|
| Retreat Revenue:  | \$8045.00 |
| Retreat Expenses: | \$8182.09 |
| Net Balance:      | -\$137.53 |

The committee is in the process of reviewing the post-retreat questionnaires.

-Bill Meoni, ([billmeoni@hotmail.com](mailto:billmeoni@hotmail.com))

### **Retreat Revue Committee**

During the 2009 Annual Sangha meeting, the retreat committee shared comments from previous post-retreat questionnaires that suggested that some of our members were not completely satisfied with our current retreat venue and caterer. Additionally, some concern was expressed regarding the retreat cost, scholarships and other retreat financial considerations. Subsequently, the retreat review committee was formed at the request of the 2009 CCC to investigate alternate retreat venues, caterers etc. The members of the committee are Bill Meoni (Chair), Tony Silvestre, Kati Holtz and Dennis Ondek.

The committee met and reviewed retreat venue information collected by Martha and Red, investigated alternate caterers and renewed the financial accountings from previous retreats. A survey has been developed for the Sangha to determine interest levels in changing the aforementioned prior to the committee making a final assessment and recommendation.

-Bill Meoni, ([billmeoni@hotmail.com](mailto:billmeoni@hotmail.com))

### **Website Report**

A collective decision was made by the Sangha to make enhancements to our Laughing Rivers Sangha website. Bill Meoni would serve as Chair with help from Matt Bennett. Tony Silvestre suggested that an additional, outside programmer could be used if needed. The enhancements we made this year were: the addition of the SnippetMaster web page editor to facilitate timely web page updates; the addition of a Sangha calendar; the addition of an

Audio/Video page for listening to and watching Dharma talks; the addition of a Sangha page for displaying a Sangha slide show and the Laughing Rivers Sangha video; as well as the addition of a password protected Members Area for misc. documents. A decision was also made to switch the Domain Name management service to eNom.

-Bill Meoni, ([billmeoni@hotmail.com](mailto:billmeoni@hotmail.com))

## **Tuesday Night Set-up and Breakdown Group Report**

One or two Sangha members are needed to arrive a half hour or so before the Tuesday sit each week, to set up the room (alter, library, chairs signs, etc.) before the members arrive. This takes about 15 minutes for one person. Pat Cassidy has been doing this for the past several years, with the assistance of a number of others who happen to show up early, and he plans to continue providing this support. When Pat can not make the sit he will notify one of the members who have a key to the building such as Dawn or Deb Brooks, and occasionally someone else will need to provide assistance with set-up. There have been a number of members assisting with the duty of returning the room to its original state (putting away the Sangha materials and returning the chairs to their place in the room, directly following the conclusion of our sit). It would be helpful to identify at least one, but preferably two members who can assume responsibility for this weekly task in the year ahead, but all members are invited to assist as they wish, but should not feel obligated to do so.

The set up and break down crew perform the following Tuesday night functions:

1. After the assigned person has opened up the building, two or three boxes are brought from the second floor to set up the altar for the Buddha, the library, and items that may be on sale that evening e.g. CD's, DVD's, etc. Chairs and cushions are also arranged for the evening.
2. After our evening has ended, the items are brought again upstairs. After the Sangha has left, the building is secured, i.e. lights turned off, doors locked by a team already in place.

Assistance from new people may include one or two folks willing to transport needed items ( as described above) to and from the 2nd floor where they are housed in an upstairs closet. This help from volunteers is always very appreciated, esp. at the end of an evening.

-Pat Cassidy and David Bajada ([pcssidy@comcast.net](mailto:pcssidy@comcast.net),  
[dbajada@handtechisp.net](mailto:dbajada@handtechisp.net))

## **Days Of Mindfulness**

The Sangha hopes to schedule monthly DOM days, on weekends, hosted by those members who wish to participate in this wonderful experience (for a good summary of the purpose, structure, and basic philosophy of what DOM is all about, I would encourage members to review Jennifer Whiteside's excellent summary of DOM, which will be posted on the Sangha website. Members are invited to this practice, and assistance with planning, coordinating such

events is available from the senior membership. Anyone planning on hosting a DOM, are asked to notify me , so that the evenet can be scheduled, and listed on the Sangha website.

-Pat Cassidy ([pcssidy@comcast.net](mailto:pcssidy@comcast.net))

### **CD Committee**

There is not much to report. I believe we have gone "into the black" but will only know for sure when we get some kind of financial report. The proceeds (after break-even) are allocated based on the song's authors. (Receipts for Happiness is here and now were designated by its author Evelyn for Plum village, Avolokita and Present Moment stay in the Sangha kitty and I haven't decided for sure but am inclined to allocate my proceeds to a retreat fund). So for the next year we can say all proceeds over break even will stay in the local or PV Sangha to support activities designated by the authors of the songs.

On another matter - I think it's time to drop the price to \$6 for one - two for \$10 (\$5 for two or more) and make a holiday push!

-Denys Candy, ([dmcandy@aol.com](mailto:dmcandy@aol.com))