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Northwest  
Dharma  
News



January/February 2009, Volume 22, #1



## Northwest Dharma News

### 2009 Annual Meeting, February 14

Please join us in Portland for the **NWDA Annual Meeting** on Valentine's Day, **Saturday, February 14**.

The meeting will take place at Ngoc Son Tinh Za Buddhist Association, 8318 SE Harney Street in Portland. Directions are posted on the NWDA website/"Home".

Registration begins at 9:30. The meeting is from 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM with a vegetarian lunch provided. Attendance and lunch are free, although donations are appreciated.

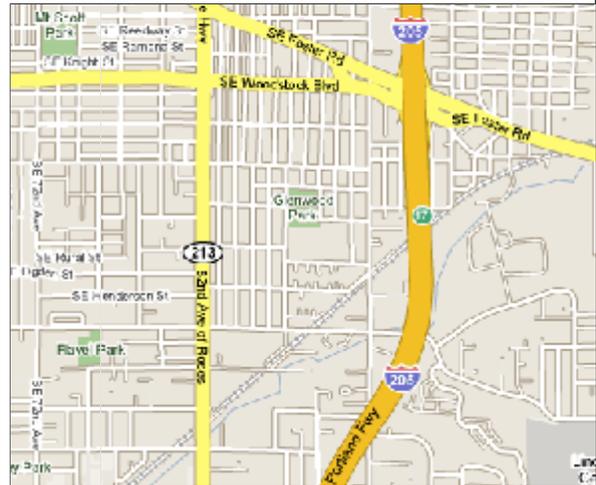
The theme of this year's meeting is "**Green Dharma - Buddhism & Ecology**".

The morning program features a keynote address by Robert Beatty, founding teacher and director of Portland Insight Meditation Center. A strong advocate of Buddhist-informed environmental awareness, Robert's accomplishments include a Master's Degree in Environmental Studies.

After lunch and networking time, a panel of Green Dharma practitioners and theorists will speak and answer questions, followed by small group discussions.

This event is open to all: members and non-members, Buddhist or interested friends and supporters. Please invite others and plan on coming yourself. This is an opportunity to meet a broad range of folks who practice, teach, or are interested in the Dharma throughout our region.

[NEXT NWDA NEWS ARTICLE >](#)



[View Larger Map](#)

Find Ngoc Son Tinh Za Buddhist Association's location and get directions at [Google Maps](#).



### NWDA 2008 Annual Report

#### Financial Information

In 2008, NWDA had income of \$34,992 and expenses of \$32,067, resulting in a positive contribution to reserves of \$1,926. The budget called for a contribution of \$655, so we exceeded that expectation by \$1,271.

Nearly half the revenue came from gifts. Membership dues accounted for 40%.

#### Volunteer Activities

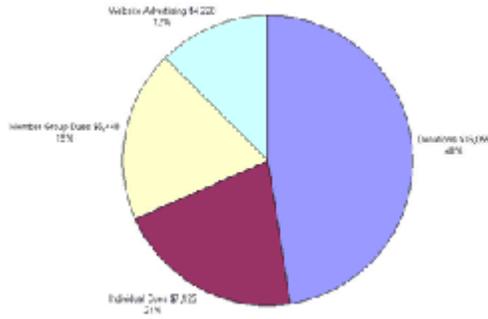
Volunteers accomplish most of the Association's work. In 2008, the Board volunteered 1788 hours of their time. This represents nearly one full-time employee. The staff volunteered 580 hours. There is only one paid position, the Executive Director, who is paid for 10 hours per week. It takes the equivalent of one and one-half paid full-time positions to do the work. The Association, therefore, is quite a ways from long-term financial sustainability.

#### Board Calendar

The Board's term begins in June. Nominations begin at the Annual Meeting on the 2nd Saturday of February and conclude one month later. The election is held from March 15 to April 15. The first meeting of the new Board takes place in June. Because the Board is dispersed throughout the region, the meeting is designed to allow all the Board members to attend in person. This last year, as in years past, the June meeting was held at Bodhi House in Olympia. Other meetings are conducted by teleconference, except for the annual strategic planning meeting, also held at Bodhi House in October.

The current Board Members are: Julie Welch (President), Clark Hansen (Vice President), Bill Hirsch (Secretary), Richard O'Connor (Treasurer), Susan Andree (Shi Yung Hsi), Dh. Avichala, Caterina De Re, Amy Groncznack, R.L. Miles, Gene Polhamus, and Nick Vail.

In keeping with the intention to be an association open to all groups and individuals dedicated to Buddhist teaching and practice, the Board represents a range of traditions and approaches to the Dharma and provides a direct experience of Mahasangha for which the Association stands.



Northwest Dharma Association Income, 2008

#### Events

The 2008 Annual Meeting was held at Prospect Congregational Church in the Capitol Hill neighborhood of Seattle. As usual, it reflected the great diversity of traditions, practice, and geographical locale which forms the membership of the Association. It was an excellent opportunity for Dharma practitioners to encounter one another and to help inform the work of the Association.

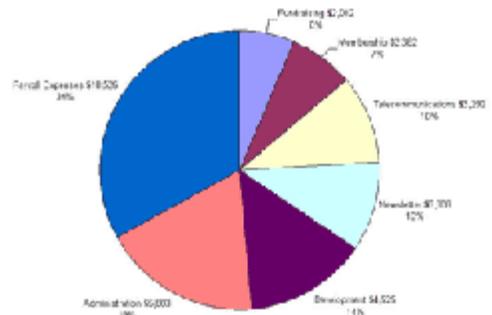
The 2008 Teachers Meeting was held at the Blue Heron Zen Center on its usual date of the first Saturday in October. This year's meeting was highlighted by the launch of TeacherSpace, an online forum, linked to our website, that allows teachers to converse about matters of special interest and import to them.

The Association was instrumental in producing the Prison Dharma Conference in conjunction with Plum Mountain Refuge that took place in November at Camp Bishop near Shelton, Washington.

In addition, the Association co-sponsored the 5th Annual Vashon Island Buddhist Seminar and the 24-hour chant at Great Vow Monastery.

#### The Northwest Dharma News

2008 saw the completion of a year's cycle of producing the news electronically, thus reducing the expenditure represented by the print news in both labor and production costs, as well as lowering our carbon footprint. We added an easy-to-use method for turning the eNews into a printable pdf file.



Northwest Dharma Association Expenses, 2008

## Technology

In 2008, the Association Board and Staff continued the ongoing work of upgrading the technological resources we use. The website continues to evolve to become a more effective tool for the networking that is at the heart of our mission. In addition, we have greatly increased our ability to communicate with our membership through regular email correspondence, as well as providing a safe, secure environment for financial transactions on our website.

## Summary

With a very meager budget, the Association continues to grow and offer greater benefits to its membership as well as to the larger community. The challenge for the future is to develop a business model that will sustain this valuable work.



## Call for Nominations for the NWDA Board

It's that time of year! The days are getting longer, the first shoots of daffodils are up (at least in Seattle) and it's time to nominate candidates for the Northwest Dharma Association Board of Directors.

Nominations are open from February 15 to March 15 and can be made online via the NWDA website, [www.nwdharma.org](http://www.nwdharma.org). The term of office is three years and begins in June.

Serving on the NWDA Board is a great way to experience fellowship with other Buddhists, especially those outside of your sangha, practice, or tradition.

So, if you've been looking for a way to get more deeply involved in the regional Dharma community or to express your generosity towards those who are already on or seeking the path, please think about submitting your nomination.

If you know of someone in your circle who would be a perfect addition to the Board, please consider nominating her/him. Candidates must be current Individual Members of the Northwest Dharma Association.



### Nothing Exists in a Vacuum: The Portland InterDependence Project

The first regional chapter of the New York City-based InterDependence Project formally opened in Portland this past September. Offering regular classes and meditation instruction as well as other special events, the Portland InterDependence Project (ID PDX) is a place to explore Buddhist/environmentalist-inspired ideas along the lines of "right livelihood", "right consumption" and "right activism".



Ethan Nichtern, founder of the parent InterDependence Project, is the author of *One City: A Declaration of InterDependence*. A second-generation Western Buddhist nurtured in the Shambhala tradition, his interpretation of Dharma as an ethical and political guidepost has earned him a following among 20- and 30-something "spiritual revolutionaries", as well as fans from older and younger generations.

The ID Project's weekly podcasts, hosted by Nichtern, offer lectures and discussions by a wide range of Buddhist and non-Buddhist teachers and thinkers, among them Sharon Salzberg, Brad Warner, Reverend Billy, and Daniel Pinchbeck. The New York group also sponsors monthly "Integral Activism" workshops, beginning and "hardcore" meditation classes, several arts-related activities, a mindful business group, an online magazine and daily blog, and more. The ID Project regards itself as "Buddhist-inspired" rather than exclusively Buddhist and is incorporated as an educational rather than religious non-profit.

Laura Ross, director of the new Portland chapter, first became interested in the ID Project as a podcast listener. A yoga instructor with an M.A. from Reed College, Ross had been studying and practicing Dharma without a sense of deep involvement. Encountering the ID Project, she felt it was "where I belonged."

Not long after reading *One City*, Ross stumbled across Ethan Nichtern through Facebook connections and, not too seriously, proposed starting a Portland ID group. Phone calls followed and the idea began to grow. Joined by meditation instructor Davee Evans, a Portland group started meeting in spring 2008. Evans, another "cradle" Buddhist in the Shambhala tradition, teaches at both ID PDX and the Portland Shambhala Center. Portland ID's official launch, keynoted by Nichtern, took place in mid-September.

The center now offers weekly meditation classes and periodic guest lectures. Mindful consumption and mindfulness in therapeutic practice have been recent topics.

"Interdependence—connection—is so important but so easy to forget," says Ross. "We're so far removed from the source of our food, our stuff. How we live, spend, throw away garbage all matter very much. There's a seamless tie-in."

As practiced by ID PDX and its sibling, meditation supports the mindful observation of connectedness in every aspect of life while reciprocally, the recognition of interdependence informs and brings special value to meditation. Of its meditation practice the ID Project says, "In each class we explore the overarching theme of interdependence—that nothing exists in a vacuum—in 21st century life."

The Portland ID Project is strongly connected to and influenced by its east coast progenitor "but it's not a copy of New York," according to Ross. "We have a different home base." The New York group, for instance, has been trying to generate enough support to call for a ban on plastic bags in their city. In Portland, this issue was already on City Hall's agenda. Thanks to this home base ID PDX is already gaining momentum.

You can learn more about the Portland InterDependence Project at the Northwest Dharma Association Annual Meeting on February 14 in Portland. Please visit <http://www.nwdharma.org/> for details.

For more information about The InterDependence Project,  
go to: <http://www.theidproject.com>.

For ID PDX, see: [www.theidproject.com/portland](http://www.theidproject.com/portland).

Contributor: Julie Welch.

Graphic: Courtesy of The InterDependence Project.



## Sravasti Abbey Receives Grant for Prison Dharma Program

The Spokane Rotary 21 recently donated funds that will make it possible for Sravasti Abbey's Prison Dharma Program to create a free DVD teaching series for distribution to prison chapel libraries. The grant allows the abbey, located in Newport, Washington, to purchase video equipment for recording and duplicating Dharma talks in DVD format. The content of the first DVD series will be Venerable Thubten Chodron's teachings on the thought training text, "Mind Training Like Rays of the Sun."

Though not part of its original mission, prison outreach has become an important part of Sravasti Abbey's commitment to benefit beings everywhere. For many years the community has supported inmates interested in Dharma by sending books, cassette tapes, and CDs to individuals and prison chapel libraries.

Encouraged by Sravasti founder and Abbess, Venerable Bhikshuni Thubten Chodron, residents and volunteers correspond regularly with inmates in various parts of the country. Venerable Chodron and other monastics also offer teachings inside prisons and are always warmly welcomed. In recent years, fifty to seventy inmates have participated in the Abbey's annual "Retreat from Afar."

"Mind Training Like Rays of the Sun," will be a ten-disc series. The text addresses how to transform adversity into the path and how to develop a loving and compassionate heart, demonstrating that our lives are more than our past actions and offering the hope of practicing compassion and benefiting others.



Copyright, Caterina De Re.

For more information, please visit:  
<http://www.sravastiabbey.org/>.

Contributor: Sravasti Abbey News, February 2009.  
Edited by NW Dharma News.  
Photo: Caterina De Re.



Snow "lounging, piece by piece" in poet Linda Greenmun's Camano Island backyard.

## Profile of a Poet: Linda Greenmun

### Snow

All night it fell  
like a cloud-shaped bear  
lounging, piece by piece,  
over this roof and that  
hibernating in hedge rows  
weighing down garden kale  
reminding us how we're not  
separate, but linked by  
what we do, and don't know:  
capped chickadee with a seed,  
pileated woodpecker—  
its cries a drift in the hush.

—Linda Greenmun  
December 17, 2008

Linda Greenmun is a poet and Buddhist who lives on Camano Island, Washington. She is the author of *Wheel of Days*. Her work can also be found in various journals and anthologies. In 2003 she was awarded a Washington State Arts Commission/Artist Trust Fellowship in poetry.

Recently she took the time to respond to questions about her practice and work. Of her answers she says, "I hope they clarify, to some degree, who it is who writes a poem."

### What is the relationship between the practice of poetry and the practice of Dharma as you know it?

I'll begin with the mantra, from the "Prajnaparamitra" or "Perfection of Wisdom" Teachings:

*TAYATHA GATE GATE PARAGATE PARASAMGATE BODHI SVAHA*

*GONE BEYOND. GONE BEYOND. GONE COMPLETELY BEYOND.  
THIS IS THE BUDDHA-MIND. SO BE IT.*

This serves as a guide for my practice of Dharma and, also, for the creation of poetry. We go beyond ordinary form and speech and mundane concerns to experience our more essential Buddha-mind as we engage in daily practice and as we attend the Buddha's instruction, illuminating the path. Of course, this is no easy task, and is more a process rather than being a goal. Likewise with the creation of art, we break through what is experienced so that what occurs serves as a learning device, a tool to take us deeper and below the surface. We allow this work to teach us something which we did not know with the initial encounter, as we unfold our relatedness with others and with the natural world.

### You have cited Venerable Christine Skarda as one of your teachers and mentioned that her reflections on the philosopher Wittgenstein served as an inspiration for your Snow poem. Could you tell us more about that?

Just as Tenzin Jesse from the Seattle Bodhiheart Sangha has translated "The Heart of Wisdom" and Maitreya's "Ornament of Clear Realization," and as she and Venerable Dhammadinna have instructed students on these texts in their "Nalanda Seminars," Venerable Christine Skarda serves students all over the world via the internet. Most recently, Christine delivered commentaries on His Holiness the Dalai Lama's text *How to Practice*. She is a philosopher as well as a Buddhist nun and, except for her lectures, lives in solitude and meditation.

Venerable Christine has discussed how reasoning and analysis (the use of wisdom) have been a key for her development of compassion. She was trying to illuminate how the background pictures that we take for granted in this life (for example, that the world was flat in the seventeenth century)—referred to by Ludwig Wittgenstein in his notes *“On Certainty”*—how these background pictures need to be questioned. She used this example to encourage students to reexamine what His Holiness advocates in *How to Practice*, in the chapter on the morality of helping others on the Bodhisattva path. Here is a quote from her commentary:

*“...The morality of helping others, I believe, directly challenges, or indirectly challenges this background picture of ourselves as private, essentially isolated individuals. All of these practices that His Holiness describes—of equalizing and exchanging ourselves for others—indicate that our pictures of ourselves need to be changed if we’re to develop real compassion. And the way to change it, it turns out, is to use analysis and reasoning. Just like changing the picture of the world—that we held prior to the seventeenth century—involved a change of ideas and analysis, reasoning and so on. So here, our picture of ourselves will undergo change if we use analysis and reasoning. And, when we change the underlying picture we have of ourselves, our attitudes towards others, our interactions, our feelings will all automatically change—because the picture is the thing that determines the kinds of feelings, interactions, beliefs, and thoughts we can have...”*

The above quotation, of course, parallels what His Holiness extends to students when he addresses the topic of Dependent Arising. When I heard, transcribed, and reread Christine’s commentary, I believe it inspired me to see the snow in a different way—as a quiet exclamation:

*“...reminding us how we’re not separate, but linked by what we do, and don’t know...”*

#### Given the idea of anatta/anatman or “no self”—who writes your poems?

It is true that I am not “inherently existent” from my own side—though this is the background picture with which we usually operate. So it is refreshing to study emptiness and begin to change the false picture, to begin understanding that we are simply mind-body parts which are the effects of karmic causes and conditions that we have created—that we are composites, which we label and cognize—this is part of our ultimate reality.

And, yet we function—this explains our conventional reality—our interdependence with all other. I write a poem or practice Dharma because of the presence of all other being. So the poem or meditation practice depends on the effort of all beings—from all being, in the verbal sense of the word. Yet, a particular poem also requires my particular aspect of this very being.

As I have learned from Venerable Dhammadinna when she taught on *emptiness* and asked students to think in terms of walls (another way of understanding background pictures or each pre-judgment that helps us to operate a bit more smoothly in the everyday world)—the walls, as if they existed in layers, start peeling away. We start peeling them away and we are left with a more expansive view, more openness, a fullness of experience, as we begin to view the world and ourselves in terms of *emptiness*.

#### What are your “sources” and what does life give you to work with?

Thank you for such a great nudge of a question. This leads to a quote, coming to you directly from 2500 years ago, from the time of the Buddha, via e-mail. As Venerable Dhammadinna has written to her students (quoting an article by Narayan Grady, *Buddhadharma*, Spring 2004):

*The Buddha called karma the light of the world because it clarifies the path.*

I have placed this quotation on the mirror in the bathroom to remind me about how lucky I am to face difficulties. Here are three examples: to have broken my hip and then to have discovered that my Vitamin D level was too low. Though it took a year to fully heal, there was more meditation time. And I no longer have to take allergy medication with the normalizing of the vitamin level—thus my mind is more alert.

When the most horrible dreams come, about being surrounded by beings who are physically suffering and I do not have any way of helping them, I remember to be grateful and try to learn what my dreams are teaching me, what my Gurus—His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Venerable Christine, Venerable Dhammadinna, and Tenzin Jesse—are trying to connect me with when I attend



“Portrait of Grandma” by Melanie, age 6. At the time Greenmun had shaved her head in mourning with all the war in the world and what she saw as many back steps in regard to women’s and minority rights.

to their teachings. That is the first point.

Secondly, for me, there are children—to see through their eyes is quite refreshing for those of us who love them!

The last example is the snow from this past December—18 inches and I was unable to go very far for a week. Yet I found how little is needed to be happy and to find a poem, how confinement means more time to study, how the hush is just right for contemplation.

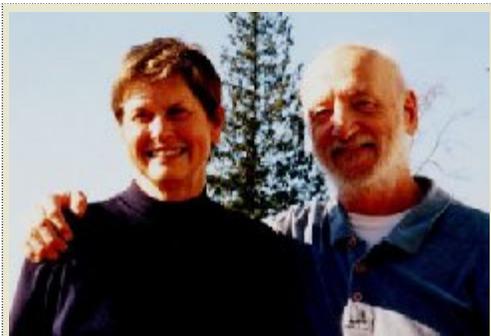
#### Is there such a thing as a “Buddhist poet?”

Very definitely, a Buddhist poet may exist, at least in the conventional sense of the term. Ultimately, we are just passing bubbles, energy taking one compositional form or another—only beyond this is our endless, boundless Buddha-nature—the bliss of which may only be experienced briefly in this life, for me at least, in sitting practice.

Here are a few verses from one Buddhist poet, Jane Hirshfield—the last two verses from her poem *The Weighing*:

*...So few grains of happiness  
measured against all the dark  
and still the scales balance.*

*The world asks of us  
only the strength we have and we give it.  
Then it asks more, and we give it.*



Linda Greenmun and her husband, Renny. They learned more from their children "than we ever taught them."

#### How did you come to the Northwest, to poetry, to the Dharma, to your particular teachers and practice?

Forty-two years ago my husband Renny accepted an administrative position from Pre-College Testing, located at the University of Washington. We traded the hot, dry flatland, the scrub-cedar and blue sky of Fort Worth, Texas for the Seattle area's mountains and waterways, its fir and cedar forests and gray sky.

Though I had completed Nursing School and become a Nurse Anesthetist by 1967, my early years after the move to Washington were focused on caring for our young children. Renny and I did not grow up under very healthy conditions—he always says that we learned more from our children than we ever taught them. And this is true.

We followed Shaun, who loved the natural world and found strengths in people we did not understand, until we had known the same people for quite a long while. Chris embraced whatever came his way and taught us to create our own happiness. We were going to confine ourselves to two children, then had an opportunity to adopt our only daughter—she taught us to love people, to laugh together as we rolled down a grassy hill and to support each other during not-so-easy times. She was born three days after Christopher—we named her Christine and they grew up as family twins. Aaron inspired us to welcome, as he did, every difficulty and see what was on the other side, to discover possibilities we had not dreamed existed for us. Renny and I now have eight grandchildren—two for each of our children.

Mostly, I worked part-time at Group Health, Virginia Mason and the University of Washington. As the children grew older, I worked on a degree in English Literature and Creative Writing, somehow managing to finish. Nelson Bentley introduced me to his Poetry Workshops, where I began to focus on this genre.

On February 14th, 1999, I took refuge as a Buddhist from Venerable Thubten Chodron, who has since founded Sravasti Abbey in Eastern Washington. I was inspired by my son Chris, who is peaceful and wise. He gave me Venerable Chodron's name. However, by the time I wanted to do the preliminary practices she was very busy with travel and thoughts of the abbey. Eventually, I found Venerable Christine and then rediscovered my old friend Tenzin Jesse, who had returned from India. She introduced me to Venerable Dhammadinna.

In 2002, Floating Bridge Press published a book of my poems that I titled *Wheel of Days*. Its publication was made possible in part by a Fellowship in Literature awarded by the Washington State Arts Commission and Artist Trust.

## How have you chosen to use sales of *Wheel of Days* to benefit others?

Peter Pereira and the other editors gave me 500 copies to sell to raise funds for Tara's Gate—a transitional group to support Buddhist practitioners returning from prison into the community. Tara's Gate could not be sustained for lack of donors, though we were able to assist a few people. There are still two boxes of *Wheel of Days* remaining.

If anyone would like to have a copy, please let me know: [lindapg@verizon.net](mailto:lindapg@verizon.net). I shall send you a book with a bookmark of the Snow poem and you may donate the \$14.00 (the original cost) or any amount you are able to give, to one of my teachers or to the Freedom Project (which teaches non-violent communication in communities, including prisons) or to Enso House (a Zen Hospice on Whidbey Island where I volunteer as an RN.) If you prefer, the donation may go to the temple or Dharma Center of your choice.

Also, let me know if you would like comments on your own poems. In exchange, you could donate to one of my teachers—most donations are tax-deductible.

May the all-Embracing Ones continue to inspire and bless us, as we try to remove our obstacles to Buddha-mind, practicing this path. Many thanks to each reader...

LG

### An Accord

Touch without touching, enchantment with light,  
Nathan's hand presses against the glass, wants  
Grandpa's hand flat, pushed on the other side

of the window before they open the door.  
Fifteen months, he holds the larger hand, drawn  
by *dog, bird, tree*, young voice testing sound  
with each greeting. Night, he returns home

with his father. Grandpa looks for smudges  
on windows. They point out *chime, leaf*,  
daylight's departure hinged on return.

*L. Greenmun*

*April to December, 2007*

### Mat Woven in Winter

Ruby for fall leaves tipped with gold,  
Matted under the maple. Jade  
For Douglas Fir. The pumpkin field's

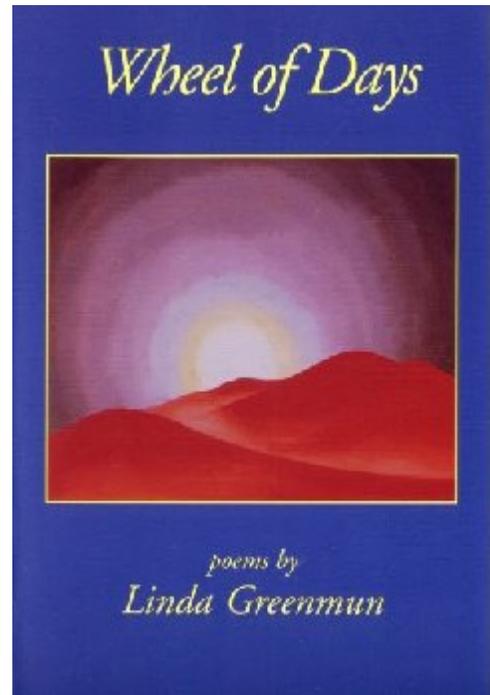
Orange plowed, covered with fog-patch,  
Rows now bear snow-geese, white necks  
Turned back on fluffed back-feathers.  
Blue and purple for evening sky.

Five years old, Melanie's quick  
To learn over and under-tulips'  
Pink are banked against yellow  
Daffodils. Her gift reminds

Us, how each season dips in and out,  
Enfolds what it's not, how we do not  
Stand apart from others in the world.

*L. Greenmun*

*(Last two lines revised since original publication,  
Manzanita Quarterly, Spring 2004)*



Contributors: Linda Greenmun, Julie Welch.

Photos: Renny Greenmun, Caterina De Re.

Art: Melanie Greenmun.



## South Sound Buddhist Peace Fellowship "Walk For Peace"

On Sunday January 18th the South Sound Buddhist Peace Fellowship conducted its second annual Silent Meditation Peace Walk in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. The walk, performed in the "mindfulness" walking style promoted and practiced by Vietnamese Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh, attracted over 80 participants. The noon walk around Capitol Lake started and ended at Marathon Park with everyone bundled up for the cold. Starting out with 57 at the park, the number increased steadily as people from around the lake joined in as the procession passed them.

This silent walking meditation has been a hallmark of Thich Nhat Hanh's teachings. He believes that to actualize peace we must mindfully include the thought of peace in our every action. His book *Peace is Every Step* is based on this premise. In 1967 Dr. King nominated Thich Nhat Hanh for the Nobel Peace Prize for his unremitting dedication to peace and non-violence. Since that time Thich Nhat Hanh has become one of the most beloved Buddhist teachers in the world and a model of how to transform modern society by offering peaceful practices that are beneficial to people of all cultures and faiths.



Participants in the second annual Silent Meditation Peace Walk, sponsored by the South Sound Buddhist Peace Fellowship, circle Olympia's Capitol Lake. In the foreground is Koro Kaisan Miles of Open Gate Zendo.



In the tradition of Thich Nhat Hanh, the "Walk for Peace" is practiced as a form of silent meditation.

Fundamental to the spirit of this walk is that it is only for the promotion of peace without political references or negative connotations. Participants were encouraged to positively generate goodwill in their hearts and wish the same for others. The hour-long walk ended with a group discussion and the promise to continue the event as an annual tradition.

In addition to members of the South Sound Buddhist Peace Fellowship, several other area Buddhists groups were represented, including Olympia Meditators, Bodhi House, Plum Mountain Refuge and Open Gate Zendo.

The members of the South Sound chapter of the Buddhist Peace Fellowship would like to give sincere thanks to all those who braved the cold to participate in this walk honoring Dr. King and the principles of peace and non-violence.

For more information about the South Sound Buddhist Peace Fellowship, please visit: <http://www.ssbpf.org/>.

Contributor: Koro Kaisan Miles.  
Photos: Kay Shultz.



### Tibetan Nuns Project Hires U.S. Operations Manager, Susanne Peterson

After a substantial search the Seattle administrative office of the Tibetan Nuns Project has hired a U.S. operations manager, a Microsoft veteran named Susanne Peterson, to help guide the organization through the coming years.

Peterson, 51, said she sought the position because it met a set of goals she'd developed after a decade at Microsoft in marketing and community-building.

"I felt that once I got to a certain place in my life I really wanted to utilize my skills in a way that was more meaningful to me and contributed to the well-being of people in this world," she said. "In particular I'm interested in working for women's causes and advancing their opportunities in education and success in leadership roles. I want to help further women's opportunities around the world, especially women who haven't had the opportunities that I've had."

After leaving Microsoft in 2005 Peterson volunteered for the State Poverty Action Network, a project of the Solid Ground non-profit in Seattle. There she coordinated membership and volunteer activities and got high marks from the organization for her contributions.

The Tibetan Nuns Project also was established in response to a real need. It was founded in 1987 to develop new monastic settings for a large influx of nuns escaping from Tibet and arriving in India. Tibetan Nuns Project has evolved into a unique organization that supports nearly 700 nuns in six nunneries in India through direct sponsorships from people around the world.

The organization moved from Berkeley to Seattle three years ago. It now operates out of a simple but cheerful one-room office, painted white with large windows, on the fourth floor of an old loft building in Seattle's Pioneer Square.

The TNP mission is to provide essential care for ordained Tibetan women, as well as supporting their secular and Buddhist educations. Many of these nuns are now receiving levels of training they didn't get even in pre-Chinese Tibet and they're advancing rapidly in their studies.

"I was so impressed by how much work has been done, and how much the organization has accomplished," Peterson said. "I was especially drawn to the organization because of its education program that combines courses in English, mathematics, social studies and computers as well as courses in Tibetan philosophical studies and dialectics. Essentially traditional values, with skills and knowledge the nuns need to live in the modern world."

In her new role as U.S. operations manager, Peterson faces the challenging task of running the Seattle office and tracking donations from hundreds of sponsors from all over the world, as well as managing volunteers, fundraising, community building and events. She also communicates with the main office in India and regularly transfers funds to India to support the nuns and nunneries there.

Basic sponsorship costs \$360 a year for each nun. Peterson said she's been impressed by how dedicated the organization's sponsors are, even in difficult times.

"We have this amazing outpouring of support for our work, for the nuns and the nunneries, from all over the world," she said. "We have quite a few sponsors who have been sponsoring nuns for years and years. Even in the economic downturn people are supporting our work and nuns through thick and thin."

While she's not specifically a Buddhist practitioner, Peterson said she's been meditating regularly for years and that she's happy to be in a position to learn more about the Dharma. She's also very interested in learning more about the nuns



Susanne Peterson, Tibetan Nuns Project's new U.S. Operations Manager.

themselves and hopes to travel to India to spend time with them to better understand their culture and day-to-day practices.

“One of the other reasons I am so thrilled about getting this position is being able to learn more about Buddhist lineages and being involved in the Buddhist community. It’s a huge opportunity for me and I am very grateful,” she said, adding that she’d like to make a trip to India in 2009.

Peterson also is interested in developing ties to the members of Northwest Dharma Association and to the Buddhist community in the region.

“First what I want to do is get everything running smoothly here, to make sure we’re getting funds directly to India so the programs can continue,” she said. “Then I want to introduce myself to the local community and figure out what’s going on and where it makes sense for us to engage.”

*For more information about the Tibetan Nuns Project,  
please visit: <http://www.tnp.org/>.*

*Contributor: Steve Wilhelm.*

*Photo: Courtesy Tibetan Nuns Project.*



### New Year, New Home for Dharma Friendship Foundation

As of January 1, 2009 Seattle's Dharma Friendship Foundation has a new home at 2420 East Union Street in the city's Central District.

For many years the group had rented space in a pleasant but somewhat out of the way location in the Magnolia neighborhood. A survey conducted a few months back confirmed what many had suspected: 45% of respondents said the Magnolia location interfered with their participation in Dharma Friendship Foundation (DFF) activities and 79% felt that having a more convenient location was of medium or great importance to them. Because serving as "a vehicle for disseminating the Dharma for the greatest number of beings possible" is integral to the DFF mission, it was clear a move was in order.

The new location is easily accessible on two major bus routes and is close to both I-5 and I-90, as well as to downtown Seattle.

In a whirlwind of cleaning and painting, with a special work party on New Year's Day, hardworking volunteers transformed the new space in time for moving day, January 3rd. Others assisted with equipment and moving trucks or with financial support to buy paint, carpets, and other supplies.

With all in readiness, DFF welcomed its first visiting teacher, Geshe Lhundub Sopa, to the new center on January 19 and 20. One of the last surviving teachers originally educated in Tibet prior to 1959 and one of His Holiness the Dalai Lama's debate examiners, Geshe Sopa offered teachings on the "Three Higher Trainings: Ethics, Concentration, Wisdom."

Dharma Friendship Foundation was founded in 1985 with Alan Wallace as its guiding teacher. The group's initial activity was to sponsor a year-long retreat led by a beloved Tibetan teacher, Gen Lamrimpa, who passed away in meditation in 2004.

Venerable Thubten Chodron served DFF as resident teacher and spiritual advisor for many years until she left to found Sravasti Abbey in Newport, Washington in 2002. She continued as spiritual advisor until 2005 when Yangsi Rinpoche took over the role.

Yangsi Rinpoche, born in Nepal of Tibetan parents, is President of Maitripa College in Portland and longtime associate of the Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition. A graduate with highest honors from Sera Je Monastery in South India, Rinpoche teaches monthly in Seattle at DFF. Ven. Thubten Chodron and other monastics from Sravasti Abbey also visit frequently to offer classes and teachings.



Found! A new location in Seattle's Central District for the Dharma Friendship Foundation. (Click on the photo above to view the image gallery)

For more information about *Dharma Friendship Foundation*, please visit: <http://www.dharmafriendship.org/>.

Contributors: *Dharma Friendship Foundation, Julie Welch.*  
Photos: *Steven Vannoy; courtesy of Dharma Friendship Foundation.*