

TABLE OF CONTENTS

NWDA NEWS

Annual Meeting 2009
Board of Directors Election
NWDA Expands to Include Yukon
Youth & Family Dharma Conference

GREEN DHARMA:

Buddhism & the Environment

Garden the Mind, Live Gently on the Earth
Photo Gallery

MAHASANGHA:

Ecumenical Buddhism

Behavioral Emergencies at Dharma Centers

DHARMA DISCUSSION:

Buddhism for Thought

"How to Discover True Wealth"

PRISON DHARMA:

Buddhism Behind Bars

Planning Meeting to Discuss Returnee Sangha

SANGHA NEWS:

Buddhism Northwest

Shambhala's "Awake in Action"
Sakya Monastery's Losar Celebration

Click **HERE** to go to the Jan/Feb issue.



Northwest
Dharma
News



March/April 2009, Volume 22, #2

- > NORTHWEST DHARMA ASSOCIATION WEBSITE
- > BACK TO TABLE OF CONTENTS
- > COMMUNITY BULLETIN BOARD
- > CONTRIBUTORS



Annual Meeting 2009

The Northwest Dharma Association held its 2009 Annual Meeting February 14 at the Ngoc Son Tinh Xa Buddhist Temple in Portland, Oregon.

The gathering brought together a delightful combination of old and new faces. The Vietnamese-American members of Ngoc Son provided not only a warm and welcoming space for the daylong meeting, but also joined in the program and served a sumptuous lunch for the visitors and their own community.

The theme of the meeting was Dharma and the environment. For a complete account of the day's program, see below: "Green Dharma."

Board of Directors Election

NWDA Members, Please Vote!

Half of the Northwest Dharma Association's 12 board of directors are elected by NWDA members (Individual and Teacher Members, and representatives of Member Groups.) Each year two of these positions come up for a vote between March 15 and April 15.

This year's candidates include two incumbents, Dick O'Connor (Portland, Oregon) and Koro Kaison Miles (Olympia, Washington), plus Glen Ray (Juneau, Alaska). To find out information about the candidates click [HERE](#) and the online ballot can be found [HERE](#).

Reminder: you must be a member of NWDA to vote. All ballots must be transmitted by **April 15th**.



Ngoc Son Tinh Xa Temple, Portland, Oregon.

On, You Huskies!

NWDA Expands to Include Yukon

At its last meeting in March, the NWDA board of directors voted to add Canada's Yukon Territory to NWDA's area of service. The decision came about because of Whitehorse, YT sangha Vajra North's strong interest in participating in NWDA activities and regional Mahasangha.

Vajra North-RigdroI Dechen Ling Society is the Canadian chapter of Chagdud Gonpa, founded by the late Chagdud Tulku Rinpoche (1930-2002), a highly accomplished and respected master of the Nyingma School of Tibetan Vajrayana Buddhism.

The Society was established in 1984, when His Eminence Chagdud Tulku Rinpoche made his first visit to Whitehorse, and continues to the present time with a solid group of dedicated Buddhist practitioners. Throughout the year, the Society regularly brings to Whitehorse various lamas to provide public presentations, conduct seminars and retreats and provide empowerments for specific meditation practices.

The Yukon is home to a variety of Buddhist groups and practitioners in both Whitehorse and Dawson City as well as outlying areas. The Northwest Dharma looks forward to becoming better acquainted with them in the coming months.

Youth & Family Dharma Conference

Where can I find a sangha that welcomes and teaches children? What is the best way to teach compassion, generosity, and mindfulness to children and young adults? How can parents use their Dharma practice in caring for children as well as themselves? Where can Dharma schools find or share resources? What can meditation and mindfulness offer to ease the strains of adolescence?

These and other questions will be addressed at a conference on "Youth and Family Dharma" planned for the fall of this year. Co-sponsored by Northwest Dharma and Nalanda West, the conference will take place in Seattle on October 9th & 10th at Nalanda. Details will follow in later editions of the News and on the Northwest Dharma and Nalanda websites.

Volunteers are needed! Please contact info@nwdharma.org if you'd like to help.

Photo: Caterina De Re.

- > NORTHWEST DHARMA ASSOCIATION WEBSITE
- > BACK TO TABLE OF CONTENTS
- > COMMUNITY BULLETIN BOARD
- > CONTRIBUTORS



Garden the Mind, Live Gently on the Earth

Notes from the 2009 NWDA Annual Meeting

[VIEW PHOTO GALLERY OF THE MEETING.](#)

To address the theme of Buddhism and the environment, the Northwest Dharma Association's 2009 Annual Meeting began with a thoughtful, poetic, and compassionate Dharma talk by Robert Beatty of the Portland Insight Meditation Community.

A longtime Dharma teacher and practicing psychotherapist, Beatty was a student in one of the earliest graduate programs in ecology back in the 1970's. Concern for the environment—"living gently on the earth"—remains an important part of his teaching and his practice.

Putting it simply, Robert asserts that "the root of the environmental crisis is greed, hatred, and ignorance."

Assessing the situation of humans and the environment from a biological-historical perspective, he concludes that "we're too successful." Our individualistic and tribal survival instincts—fight/flight, eat, reproduce—coupled with our intelligent brains have served us well in populating the earth and exploiting resources but we've "filled our petri dish." The question now is, can we use our powerful minds to "observe and interrupt our primal processes," the sources of greed and aggression.

Especially powerful, and dangerous, is our delusion of separateness. Like a water drop before it merges with a larger pool of water, we think, "Me, mine, I'm independent! Then, plop! ...But what if we are fundamentally the Universe?"

Added to the delusion of "Me" is the anxiety we feel anticipating our individual death. In our suffering we partake of "a new religion that has emerged on the planet and expanded as never before, into every country on earth. It is capitalist, consumerist materialism. It's a religion because it promises happiness, happiness through the sense doors—leading to a desperate quest. One of the causes of the incredible pillaging of the earth."

"How can Buddhist teachings inform and strengthen us?" Robert asks.

The Four Noble Truths, the Eight-Fold Path, show us how to see what it is that fuels our suffering. We now have the opportunity to know and practice, to intervene in the formerly unconscious "push-pull thing." Training the mind, we observe thoughts and impulses that lead toward suffering and then decide whether or not to feed them: "So we get to be gardeners."

With wisdom and compassion, we open beyond our view of self, beyond our own "family". The more we are able to "perceive everyone as kinsperson the better we are able to address 'the giant that is coming'—our own death, the death of human life. And life is at risk."

BECOMING HUMAN

*Once a man came to me and spoke for hours about
"His great visions of God" he felt he was having.*

He asked me for confirmation, saying,

*"Are these wondrous dreams true?"
I replied, "How many goats do you have?"*

*He looked surprised and said,
"I am speaking of sublime visions
And you ask about goats!"*

*And I spoke again saying,
"Yes brother-how many do you have?"*

"Well, Hafiz, I have sixty-two."

*"How many rose bushes in your garden,
How many children,
Are your parents still alive,
Do you feed the birds in winter?"*

And to all he answered.

*Then I said,
"You asked me if I thought your visions were true,*

*I would say that they were if they make you become
more human,
More kind to every creature and plant
That you know."*

Amen

*(This poem by 14th century Persian poet, Hafez,
concluded Robert Beatty's Dharma talk.)*

The afternoon portion of the meeting was an open discussion with panel members, Mike O'Brien, green-building specialist with the City of Portland's Office of Sustainable Development; Ven. Adhisila, a hemp advocate; Satya Vayu, Soto Zen priest and leader of an environmentally alternative community in Portland; and Bill Hirsch, co-founder of EcoSangha Seattle.

Citing the "wonderful aspirations" of the green movement which, he notes, resonate with the admonitions of the suttas "to live gently on the earth," Robert reminds us that "we leave a trail behind." The Dharma makes it possible to address issues, provide leadership, with grace—whether we succeed or not.

"Thus we act forcefully, lovingly in a green direction but without attachment to the results. That's where the practice gets really hot."

Though not a Buddhist, Mike O'Brien offered one of the most coherent illustrations of karma and right intention that many in the audience had ever heard, reminding people to begin seeking answers to green building questions by looking carefully at deeper issues within oneself and without: examining, for example, one's own real priorities and the upstream and downstream of construction materials over a long time span, including how workers are treated, thus "opening yourself to the consequences of what you do."

Steven Brook, Portland resident and former "Recycler of the Year", referred to energy efficiency as a form of "charitable offering." He advocated reducing consumption of packaged products over "recycling" and offered tips on how to do so. Some practical advice from others included how to cook rice with retained heat and to "break in" a compact fluorescent light bulb.

The centrality of Dharma was reinforced by Susan Giese, who noted the tendency for the illusion of separation to arise between green advocates and the people they perceive as threatening to the environment. Strong as that habitual tendency is, we must refrain from making "them" the enemy.

Several people remarked on the difficulty of making choices between "the lesser of two evils" and the anguish that results. Reminding listeners that from a Dharma point of view "everything is perfect in this moment", Satya equated a "perfect complete life" with the basic practice of choosing one good thing at a time...

The meeting, held at Ngoc Son Tinh Xa Buddhist Association in Portland, concluded with expressions of gratitude and a dedication of merit in Ngoc Son's magnificent shrine room.

Audio of Robert Beatty's Dharma talk is available at:
www.pimc.org.

Contributors: Robert Beatty, Julie Welch.
Photos: Caterina De Re.

- > NORTHWEST DHARMA ASSOCIATION WEBSITE
- > BACK TO TABLE OF CONTENTS
- > COMMUNITY BULLETIN BOARD
- > CONTRIBUTORS



Behavioral Emergencies at Dharma Centers: A Compassionate, Mindful Response

Though rare, it does happen from time to time that unstable individuals engage in disruptive, possibly frightening, or even dangerous behavior at Dharma centers, on retreats, or in interactions with teachers or sangha members. After experiencing such an incident last year, Dan Peterson of the Shambhala Meditation Center of Seattle created a detailed protocol to help other teachers and sangha leaders prepare themselves and their Dharma groups in case a difficult situation should arise.

The complete document, "Working with Behavioral Emergencies at Dharma Centers" will be available soon on the Northwest Dharma interactive forum, TeacherSpace. Introductory comments and other excerpts from the protocol follow.

"Working with Behavioral Emergencies at Dharma Centers"

Extreme behaviors unexpectedly wake us up. Shocking moments of vividness can also rouse fear. When fear arises we feel the need to protect ourselves, and our propensities for passion, aggression, and ignorance are unleashed. Occasionally individuals act out at Dharma centers, and this can challenge us in unexpected ways. How do we react – what are our feelings? How do we regard the person experiencing such apparent difficulties?

Noticing:

As Buddhist practitioners we have training that helps us to simply notice. We notice our visceral state – adrenaline, emotions, physical tightening. Perhaps we might notice a deep sadness – violence is very, very old, and we have encountered such situations many times already. Most of us shut down very quickly when a shocking event occurs – we cannot stand to remain for long in such vivid awareness.

We also notice the person having the upheaval or outburst. There is a lot of intelligence in such situations. All behavior has a communicative function. It is not that the person is making a conscious expression, but a great deal is being communicated with the behavior. So we simply notice the person and what they are doing.

We also notice the environment altogether. How are other people responding? Violence can evoke powerful reactions. Is anyone having particular problems in response, is anyone adding further fuel to the situation, is anyone in physical danger? Is the person acting to destroy property at the Dharma center?

The ground of skillfully entering extreme situations is the capacity to notice. It is helpful to think through a number of issues in advance as well...

Advance thinking:

Who steps in when a person acts out? Is it the teacher, the coordinator, the center administrator, the person leading meditation? This may vary from organization to organization, and also from situation to situation. But it might be a good idea to have a discussion about this, because it is so common to freeze. The discussion itself helps clarify what is already in place, the relationships and roles we each have in our communities. If one or two people know they are serving to protect the situation that can be something of an antidote when we are stunned by unfolding events.



Ceramic art by Issaquah, Washington artist, poet, and Zen teacher, Anita Feng.

*Extreme behavior:
[The guide gives information on mania, psychosis, depression, and disorientation, as well as non-psychiatric disruptive states.]*

What is it that is being protected? Our Buddhist practice has been working towards undermining the solidity of ego. Vivid events might dislodge fixed mind – but they can also point to our tendency to shut down, solidify a sense of self and other, to objectify perceived threats. Dharma protection is protecting access to experiencing our true nature. We are protecting our open hearts, the teachers who provide instruction, the environment of practice, and the Sangha.

Being stunned by extremes dulls us, and waking from that has a quality of softening and letting go – letting go of the seeming solidity of the situation. Confidence is described as the practical manifestation of gentleness. It is necessary to be gentle to ourselves to see where we have solidified in a reactive way in extreme situations and that gentleness is a balm that opens us up so that we can skillfully act.

*Skillful actions:
[These include being aware of a distortion of time sense, remaining present, being gentle, de-escalating with non-judgmental empathy and by reducing stimulation and attention. For a situation when de-escalation fails, advice is given on advance preparation of emergency numbers, getting intervention, interacting with police and emergency workers, following up with authorities. Issues of confidentiality and after care for sangha members are also addressed.]*

For center members:

It is helpful to communicate to others that assistance is being provided and minimize disruptions to planned activities and events. Continuing with a program, if possible, keeps others engaged and helps minimize attention to the individual in crisis. This is an opportunity to bring upheavals to the path and sometimes there is an unanticipated richness that comes after a disturbing event if one is able to practice.

...When we bring our experience to practice we have an opportunity to strengthen our capacity to remain awake in a vast rich world.

For more information, you may contact Dan Peterson at peterhana@comcast.net. To learn more about Shambhala Meditation Center of Seattle, please visit: www.seattle.shambhala.org.

*Contributor: Dan Peterson.
Ceramic art & photo: Anita Feng,
rakubuddha.blogspot.com.*

- > NORTHWEST DHARMA ASSOCIATION WEBSITE
- > BACK TO TABLE OF CONTENTS
- > COMMUNITY BULLETIN BOARD
- > CONTRIBUTORS

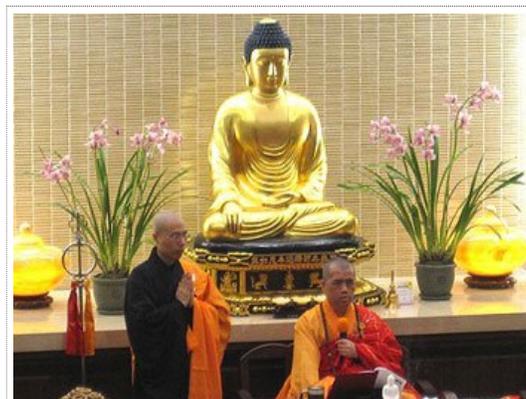


“How to Discover True Wealth”

Dharma Talk at Buddha Jewel Monastery of Seattle

March 16 was a very momentous day for the Buddha Jewel Monastery of Seattle. Venerable Jian Deng, the Abbot of the Chung Tai Chan Monastery in Taiwan and five masters came to Buddha Jewel for a special visit. Ven. Jian Deng transmitted the Three Refuges and Five Precepts and delivered a Dharma talk on “How to Discover True Wealth.”

During the Abbot’s services, 15 people formally became Buddhists and another 18 men and women took Five Precepts in advancing their Buddhist practice. Significantly, most of these new lay followers began their Buddhist practice during the past three months. On behalf of Grand Master Wei Chueh, the founding master of Chung Tai, Ven. Jian Deng acted as the Precept Master during the Transmission of the Three Refuges and the Five Precepts Ceremony. He encouraged all the new Buddhists and upasakas and upasikas to continue to uphold the guideline of doing no evil, performing good deeds, and purifying one’s own mind.



Venerable Master Jian Deng (seated), Abbot of Chung Tai Monastery in Taiwan, visited Buddha Jewel Monastery recently with five other Chung Tai masters to transmit the Three Refuges and Five Precepts. His attendant (left) is Ven. Master Jian Qi.

After the Transmission of the Three Refuges and Five Precepts Ceremony, Ven. Jian Deng gave a Dharma talk on discovering “true wealth.” We are all taught to pursue wealth and win respect since childhood. However, being rich and powerful doesn’t necessarily translate to true wealth. He cited the example of Bernard L. Madoff, former chairman of the NASDAQ stock exchange, who defrauding thousands of investors for almost \$65 billion. Although Madoff became very wealthy and influential, he was brought down by his dishonest behavior and now faces prison for the rest of his life. That is, he achieved his goals, but it led to unwanted consequences. Why?

Ven. Jian Deng pointed out that it’s all right to pursue wealth; however we should always take the causality of that pursuit into account. The reason why we always suffer and can’t get what we want is that we don’t have the right understanding of the true nature of life.

So how does one discover true wealth? Ven. Jian Deng said that we first should first understand our true nature, which is unborn and undying. We then see that everyone is equal, and also by the law of causality, which is at work everywhere and at all times, we are interconnected and our every action affects everyone. This means we cannot just think about “my benefits,” but instead how to benefit others as well as ourselves. In summary, understanding the two important rules: our pure Buddha nature, and our interdependent karma relationships, we will know how to achieve our goals without unwanted effects. That is “true wealth.”

There were about 90 participants attending the Dharma Talk. Among the dignitaries honoring the Dharma Talk were Daniel Liao, Director General, Taipei Economic and Cultural Office (TECO) in Seattle and Andrew S. L. Lin, director of the TECO Culture Center as well as many artists from around the Seattle area.

Buddha Jewel Monastery offers Zen Buddhism classes for adults as well as children. The Abbot and Dharma Masters there, along with the president of the Dharma Support Association, Frances Goldman, invite people of all ages to come to the Monastery and enjoy the learning and meditation opportunities.

Please check the Buddha Jewel Monastery website buddhajewel.org for the latest offering of services and special events.

Contributor: Ven. Jian Du.

Photo credit: Frank Kliewer.

- > NORTHWEST DHARMA ASSOCIATION WEBSITE
- > BACK TO TABLE OF CONTENTS
- > COMMUNITY BULLETIN BOARD
- > CONTRIBUTORS



Planning Meeting to Discuss Returnee Sangha

For many reasons, inmates who take up or deepen a Buddhist practice in prison often have difficulty maintaining that practice after their release. Many are distracted by the day-to-day challenges of survival. Some have trouble finding or being accepted by a Buddhist teacher or sangha. The problem of support and practice after prison was an important topic at the November 2008 Prison Dharma Conference.

The possible creation of a "returnee sangha" in the Seattle area, as well as ways of supporting sanghas and returnees in engaging with each other, will be the focus of a meeting Wednesday evening, April 22. The meeting will take place at Freedom Project's new location, 1930 6th Avenue South #101, at 7:00 PM.

Buddhist returnees, teachers, prison volunteers, and welcoming sangha members of various traditions are invited to participate. Because of Department of Corrections restrictions no one under the age of 18 may attend.

For more information, please contact jewel@seanet.com.



Contributor: Julie Welch.

*Ceramic art & photo: Courtesy of Anita Feng, the Buddha Builder.
www.rakubuddha.blogspot.com*

- > NORTHWEST DHARMA ASSOCIATION WEBSITE
- > BACK TO TABLE OF CONTENTS
- > COMMUNITY BULLETIN BOARD
- > CONTRIBUTORS



Shambhala's "Awake in Action" Tackles Housing and Food Needs

The Seattle Shambhala Center recently launched a new social action group, called Awake in Action, with the goal of integrating meditation practice with active engagement in community service and activism. Awake in Action's first projects included a collection of cold weather gear for Real Change, Seattle's poverty and homelessness action newspaper, and a food drive to benefit Northwest Harvest. The food drive was combined with a work party at the Cherry Street food bank.

For the group's next effort, AiA decided to undertake a small project on behalf of Downtown Emergency Service Center (DESC). Here's how it happened.

At the initial AiA organizing meeting, homelessness was one of the top two issues of interest for the group as a whole. One of AiA's members already had a volunteer connection to DESC, an agency that provides emergency shelter, mental health care, addiction treatment, and supportive housing for over 6000 men and women each year. The Union Hotel, located in the Pioneer Square area of downtown Seattle, is DESC's earliest supportive housing building. Opened in 1994, it provides safe, affordable housing for 52 formerly homeless disabled men and women. But it's an old building and is in need of painting and other maintenance and TLC.



Shambhala's Mark Everard prepares woodwork for painting.



"Awake in Action" workers, from left: Mark Everard, Carol Horowitz, Sandra Noel, Mike Mayer, Joan Loeken, Mark Helsel.

The AiA group was invited to spend a few hours at the Union helping to sand and then wash down doors, door frames, and other wood molding and trim on one of the residential floors, to prepare for painting. Under the guidance of Janelle Rothfolk from DESC, six members of AiA spent about three hours at the Union on Sunday, March 22 doing just that.

Janelle also gave AiA group members an orientation, including a look at the kitchen garden maintained by the residents. AiA will be exploring whether the group might deepen their connection to DESC and the Union Hotel in the months to come.

NEXT SANGHA NEWS ARTICLE >

For more information about the Seattle Shambhala Center and Awake in Action, please visit: www.seattle.shambhala.org. For more information about DESC, please visit www.desc.org.

Contributor: Carol Horowitz.
Photos: Carol Horowitz, Janelle Rothfolk.

- > NORTHWEST DHARMA ASSOCIATION WEBSITE
- > BACK TO TABLE OF CONTENTS
- > COMMUNITY BULLETIN BOARD
- > CONTRIBUTORS



Sakya Monastery's Losar Celebration Benefits Multiple Causes

Despite frigid temperatures and snow, the crowds turned out for the Sakya Monastery annual Tibetan New Year celebration, Losar. The crocuses were bravely sprouting in Seattle's Greenwood Friendship Garden outside, but the true sunshine was just inside the doors in the form of H.E. Dagmo Kusho Sakya's homemade Tibetan hot sauce. There was a wonderful selection of books to browse through, too, for sale by Sakya volunteers.

Inside the main hall, all manner of Tibetan and Himalayan handicrafts were on display: colorful rugs, clothing, purses, malas, door hangings, bowls, scarves—a little Lhasa in the Northwest. The Monastery set up tables with food offerings and traditional Tibetan artwork, clothing, and personal items. Door prizes and raffles rounded out the mix.

The Tibetan Nuns Project returned again this year, offering information on their work to educate and support nuns and nunneries in India and Nepal from all Tibetan Buddhist lineages. TNP's fundraising effort includes sale of items made by the nuns, such as dharma wheels, kataks, bags, prayer flags, malas, dolls, and the ever-popular Tibetan Nuns Project calendar.



Held each year in the Greenwood neighborhood of Seattle, Sakya Monastery's Tibetan New Year celebration attracts many from outside the Tibetan community with its offerings of food and crafts.



The Tibetan Nuns Project booth displays a variety of crafts and calendars.

The big hit of the afternoon was, of course, the wonderful Tibetan food. Lovingly made by Sakya members and eagerly anticipated by all, the tables were consistently full with happy visitors. Veggie momos! Long Life Rice! Tibetan cookies! Butter tea and more butter tea. The cooks outdid themselves this year.

Surrounded by beautiful art, meaningful organizations, and sharing good food and laughter with friends and neighbors--there was no better way to celebrate the New Year!



H.E. Dagmo Kusho Sakya, far left, with other dignitaries and supporters of Sakya monastery.

< PREVIOUS SANGHA NEWS ARTICLE

For more information about Sakya Monastery of Tibetan



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- Robert Beatty is founder and guiding teacher of Portland Insight Meditation Community. A practicing psychotherapist, he has a strong interest in environmental issues.
- Carol Horowitz lives in Seattle and practices with the Seattle Shambhala Meditation Center. She is a dedicated student of the cello.
- Ven. Jian Du is a resident Master at Buddha Jewel Monastery in Seattle.
- Leslie McLean practices and volunteers at the Sakya Monastery of Tibetan Buddhism in Seattle.
- Dan Peterson is a teacher and meditation instructor in the Shambhala tradition. He also volunteers and leads retreats in both Oregon and Washington prisons.
- Julie Welch is current president of the Northwest Dharma Association.

Photo Credits: Steven Dallos, Caterina De Re, Anita Feng, Carol Horowitz, Frank Kliewer, Janelle Rothfolk. Cover: Stephen Schildbach.

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- > NORTHWEST DHARMA WEBSITE
- > BACK TO TABLE OF CONTENTS



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DISCLAIMER

The Northwest Dharma Association is a voluntary membership organization of Buddhist temples, organizations, and informal groups in the greater Pacific Northwest. While the NWDA reserves the right to define what constitutes a Buddhist group for the purpose of membership qualification, our intention is to be an association open to all groups and individuals dedicated to Buddhist teaching and practice.

NWDA also serves as a clearinghouse of information about the Northwest Buddhist community. NWDA does not endorse or vouch for other organizations' events, practices, or projects that appear in the NWDA's printed or online calendars, directories, or articles.

COMMUNITY BULLETIN BOARD

September/October Announcements

Volunteer

The **Northwest Dharma News** needs generous, capable photographers to donate their time and work. The News is seeking file photos as well as photographers able to cover specific assignments and events. If you're interested, please contact us at news@nwdharma.org.

If you would like to submit an article for publication in the next issue of the **Northwest Dharma News**, please send your submission to news@nwdharma.org.

About the Community Bulletin Board

The Community Bulletin Board is intended to publicize items of interest and benefit to the Northwest Dharma community. Members, both group and individual, of the Northwest Dharma Association are invited to share information about job and volunteer opportunities, publicize needs and opportunities, locate and share resources, and more.

The items published here must not be commercial in nature. **Event** listings must be placed in the **Calendar of Events** section of the website. **Ongoing events** such as a group's practice schedule must be placed in the **Group Directory** on the website. Listings for **Business and Services** providers may be placed in the **Business and Services Directory**.

If you would like to submit an item for the Community Bulletin Board, please send your submission to info@nwdharma.org.