

Guest House Newsletter, Fall 2010

Letter from Adam Fuller, Executive Director

As you all know, I will be leaving Guest House this fall and moving to Washington State, near Seattle, so this will be my last newsletter as executive director. I want to thank both the board and the staff of Guest House, as well as everyone in the wider Guest House community, for all the support I have received while doing this job. It's been a transformative year, both for Guest House and for me personally, and I'm happy to be leaving Guest House in a good place for its next executive director.

But there is still a lot happening before I leave. This fall, two members of Emerald Mountain 3 will be leading benefit fundraising events at Guest House. On September 19th, Don Shaw will be performing on our grand piano and on November 16th Jordan Goodman will be speaking and answering questions about money, debt, and other personal finance issues. These events, along with our free weekly yoga and meditation classes, are opening up Guest House to the local community and broadening our base of supporters. We hope to offer more of these kinds of program in the future, so if you have an idea for a similar community event that could be held at Guest House, please let me know.

The Board, the College of Teachers (a committee that oversees Guest House's educational mission), and I have also been working on a slate of new programs for 2011 and 2012. At this point, we have five programs scheduled, and are working on quite a few more. Please see the announcement at the back of this newsletter for a list of upcoming programs. Rates and registration materials will be available in about a month.

I have also been working with the board to lower our rates for these programs. For 2011, we have managed a 10% decrease in room and board rates for our programs, and we are working on other ways to make them more affordable. As in 2010, we have a generous scholarship program to assist those who need it.

October is looking like it will be our busiest month ever. One of the Boston Diamond Approach groups, led by Duncan Scribner, will hold its first retreat at Guest House at the beginning of the month. This is an important event for Guest House as it moves us closer to our aim of becoming an east coast home for the Diamond Approach.

We are also excited to be hosting many other groups in October, including Foundation for Human Enrichment, the Zen Monastery Peace Center, the Ontological Design Community, Soul Collage, and the Four Winds Society.

I'm happy to report that Will Galvin will be staying on as Facilities Manager. We also have a new staff member in our office, Marianne Hile, who will be assisting Rhonda with many administrative tasks.

The search for our new Executive Director is moving along well, and so far I'm quite impressed with the candidates. Laurie Leonard is leading the search committee, and her report about this is on the following page.

That's all the news I have for now. I hope to see you all around during your fall Emerald Mountain weekends.

Adam

Letter from Laurie Leonard, Chair, Ten Directions

As we move into fall, the board's top priority is hiring Guest House's new ED. There has been a high level of interest in the position, and we are being careful to thoroughly explore the applicants' backgrounds and abilities. We want to find an ED who not only has strong management skills and the ability to run a successful business, but can also relate to and understand the needs of groups doing inner work.

The College of Teachers is hard at work implementing Alia's vision of using Guest House to bring the Work into the world. Several exciting programs have been planned for 2011, and more are in the works for 2012. In addition, the new Diamond Approach New York group is off to a great start, with 60 students enrolled thus far. DANY will be meeting in New York during 2011, and they hope to have their first Guest House retreat in 2012.

One of my top priorities this year as the chair of Ten Directions is to develop more ways Guest House can serve the Emerald Mountain community, beyond being the site of our retreats. Various ideas are being explored at the board level, and we hope to be able to announce some new initiatives very soon.

As everyone knows, Adam will be moving to the west coast in the late fall. There are, of course, no adequate words to describe how deeply his presence—and that of Mandy and Arden—will be missed. We have all grown up with Adam and his family and witnessed the development and unfolding of Adam's many talents: the gifted culinary skills he brought to our delicious meals over the years; the passion, dedication and enthusiasm he exhibited while spearheading the search for a retreat center; and, most recently, the professionalism and sensitivity he brought to

the management of GH. And, of course, Mandy's supportive presence and Arden's bright spirit have been a part of the field of Guest House from the very start. It is with a very heavy heart that we say goodbye to them. But we are also happy to see Adam spreading his wings and moving with the natural dynamism of the universe, and we wish for the whole family all they wish for themselves.

Executive Director Search

The search for Guest House's new Executive Director is underway, and is going well. Laurie Leonard is chair of the Search Committee; its members are Josie Sentner and Jill Berman from EM2; Nancy Closs from EM3; Jane Bronson, a Diamond Approach teacher-in-training; and Adam Fuller. Marlene Reisman from EM1 and Linda Marvin are serving as consultants to the committee. Linda is a highly respected management consultant who is a member of a national Diamond Approach retreat group.

As of September 4, we have received 105 résumés for the ED position, and they are still coming in. Out of this number, 11 applicants have been selected for initial phone interviews, 75 applicants have been rejected, and 19 resumes have yet to be evaluated.



Photo by Laura Way

The ED job opening has been listed on the following websites: Monster/New York Times, idealist.org, LinkedIn, the Cornell School of Hotel Administration, the Connecticut Association of Not-For-Profits, the Connecticut Craigslist sites, Facebook, FindTheDivine.com, and our own website. If you know someone who might be a good candidate for the position, please tell him or her about it or give his or her name to a member of the Search Committee.

News from the Finance Committee

The financial results of Guest House for the first six months of 2010 are slightly below the budget. This was due to the revenue that was foregone because Alia was not able to complete her Soul Psychology and Presence in Action programs.

Third party sales continue to be strong with new groups continually booking retreats at Guest House. Many groups who have been here this year and last are making reservations for next year, which is a great support for future planning. Our operations and staff performance are excellent and the building and grounds are very solid.

We are cautiously optimistic as we move into the second half of the year. There are unknown factors that might impact our short-term performance. As some Emerald Mountain students evaluate their commitment to continue with the work and with the new teachers at Guest House, some may join other groups and others may decide to leave. Such attrition from the groups will affect future revenue.

We continue to negotiate with the town of Chester about our real estate tax exemption. Our lawyers are hopeful that a resolution will be reached by the end of the year, and several board members continue to devote time and attention to resolving this important issue.

Additionally, the contributions we have received to date are lower than they were last year. We urge all of you to make a pledge to support the mission and work that Alia created for us. Your donations are a critical support of Guest House and essential to our survival. The Resource Development committee article in this newsletter will tell you more about how you can participate in the annual appeal this fall.

Fund Raising News from the Resource Development Committee

As Emerald Mountain students return to Guest House for our fall weekend retreats, we pause to contemplate the enormous moment of transition in which we find ourselves. It is

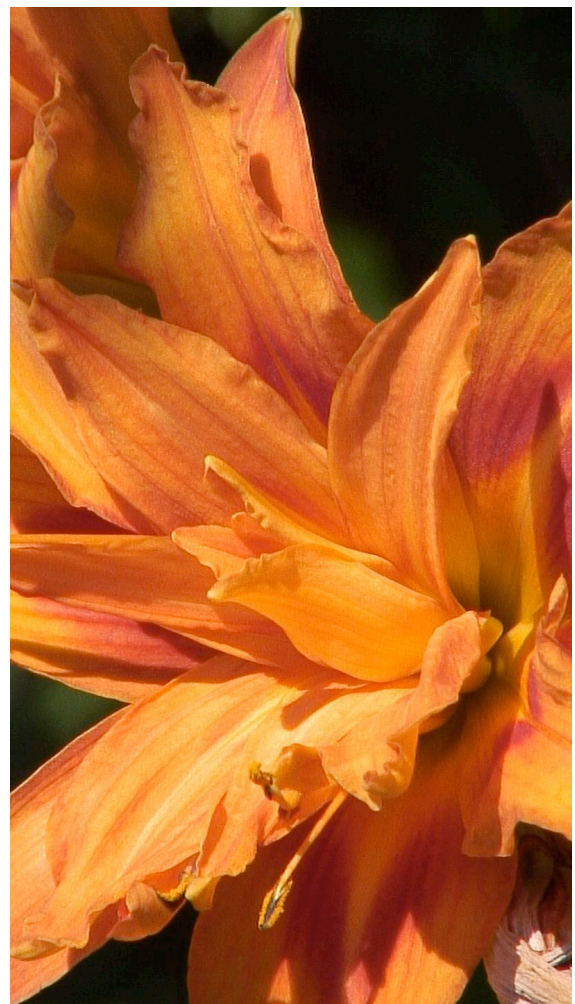


Photo by Hameed Qabazard

the beginning of a new era without Alia as our loving teacher. As Adam moves on to pursue new opportunities, the board is conducting an exhaustive search for a new executive director. The economy continues to be a difficult challenge for us all. And we are dealing with several unknown factors (such as ongoing negotiations with Chester about how much real estate tax we will be required to pay) that may affect Guest House as we move through this period of transition.

We are encouraged that, in the midst of this change and movement, the foundation of Guest House remains strong and stable. That foundation is not only our comfortable building and beautiful grounds. It is also the passionately dedicated staff, a committed board, the guests and the many Ridhwan students who founded and built this center for our work.

Of course, contributions are an important source of revenue that supports the continued health of Guest House. And despite the stable foundation we know we have, we are seeing the amount of donations received thus far into the second half of this year not only fall below last year's figures, but also of the budget targets. Alia used to say that the Work is like putting a quarter into a slot machine and getting a million dollars. It's time to put another quarter or two in that slot machine! The Board will be sending you an annual fund-raising letter at the beginning of October to ask for your financial support. We hope you will respond enthusiastically and help

continue building the mission that Alia began over five years ago and made a reality with Guest House.

Alia loved Guest House because she believed that gathering in the same place over time created and enlivened the space to support the Diamond Approach teaching and the teachings of visiting groups. We believe everyone can agree that meeting at Guest House supports our work. Please consider making a generous donation for this year and beyond. Pledge now and pay later.

Report from the Facilities and Forest Committee

The F&F Committee has been working on a policy for exhibiting student art that will be presented for approval at the upcoming board meeting. More information will be coming soon, but the aim is to ensure that our many talented artists have a forum in which to exhibit their work.

Also, we're happy to announce that money has been allocated for the White Barn curtains and we are making final arrangements to banish those white sheets to another dimension in favor of a lovely silk fabric Alia had approved in the winter.

Also, kudos to Noell Goldberg, who led work projects at both summer retreats, the end result being a stunning shade garden between the deck and the corn crib. It is a gorgeous addition to the GH grounds. Thanks Noell!