

# Guest House Newsletter, Winter 2010

## From Steve Kennedy, Executive Director

It is a pleasure and an honor to have been chosen as Executive Director of Guest House. I look forward to introducing myself in person at your upcoming retreats in December. In the meantime, I wanted to write to you to express my appreciation for this unique opportunity to serve you, the broader Diamond Approach community, as well as the staff and guests of our retreat center. It has been a whirlwind month; I've been learning a lot on the fly!

October was our busiest month ever at Guest House: more than 650 people walked through our doors. Indeed, this quarter has been the most successful in the two and a half years that Guest House has been operating. We have served more groups in more retreats than ever before, and our calendar is gaining momentum in the new year as more groups look to continue our relationship and re-book with us.

Despite the transition of leadership that had been drawing Adam away from the day-to-day operation, I witnessed the staff perform seamlessly to serve back-to-back-to-back retreats. This was one of the strongest first impressions I received upon my arrival. Adam led Guest House efficiently and elegantly, and he leaves it in a far better condition than when he stepped into that role. Fortunately for us all, Adam is staying on as a Board member, so we will still be able to draw on his experience and enthusiasm while all of us take Guest House to the next phase of its development.

My interview process was extensive and thorough, and it gave me the opportunity to be exposed to the Board and its unique way of doing things. I have worked with many committees and boards in the past, but none in my experience operate with such awareness in their

functioning. Their professionalism in their way of being, left a strong impression, and that orientation certainly enticed me toward working with them. Within my first week on the job I got the chance to sit in on a full board meeting and work directly with its extremely talented, resourceful and committed members. I am consistently impressed with the level of truth and cooperation. It was wonderful to meditate before beginning the business at hand, and I look forward to participating in these meetings from this perspective. I appreciate the opportunity to work with Laurie and the rest of the Board to continue making Guest House a supportive home for your work.

Here's a little background about me: I founded and operated an award winning catering and in-house dining services company that serviced Fortune 500 companies for 25 years. Additionally, I founded and operated a gourmet café in Danvers, Massachusetts for 12 years, which won the Readers' Choice Award for "Best Coffee Shop on the North Shore" for 5 consecutive years. I also operated a seafood restaurant in Lynn, Massachusetts for 4 years.

Twenty years ago I began an intensive independent study of human development, which ultimately led to selling my businesses, becoming a trained and certified business and life coach, and opening a center that hosted workshops and seminars.



*One of last year's blizzards at Guest House. Photo by Laura Way.*



*Steve Kennedy.*

My personal goal has been to integrate my business skills in the area of spiritual and personal development. I served two terms as an elected town official in Danvers. I also served as a volunteer Big Brother for 10 years and was a finalist for “Big Brother of the Year” in Boston in 2004.

I have been married to my wife and best friend, Pattie, for 25 years. She is a nurse and currently looking for employment here in the Chester area. We have two adult children, Stephen(21) and Amy(19). Pattie will be joining me soon and we will be living in Parmalee while we sell our home in Danvers.

I want to extend my absolute best wishes to Adam, Mandy, and Arden as they start on their new beginnings in Washington. I have tremendous respect for the way Adam has held the project from its inception, and I recognize what his family’s departure means to your community.

I am looking forward to meeting all of you during your upcoming retreats. Please know that my office is always open. Feel free to stop by and introduce yourself, or send me an e-mail at [steve@guesthousecenter.org](mailto:steve@guesthousecenter.org). It is truly a pleasure to work for you at the home for your Work. Please let me know whatever we can do to support you here at Guest House.

### **From Laurie Leonard, Chair, Ten Directions**

Please join me in welcoming Steve Kennedy to Guest House as our new ED. Adam is now in Washington with Arden and Mandy, but we are still in regular contact with him as he moves into his new role as a Ten Directions Board member and a member of the Board’s Finance and Resource Development committees.

Please also welcome another new Board member to Ten Directions: Jane Bronson was elected to the board at our November meeting. Jane is a Diamond Approach teacher in the supervisory process. She works with individual students in New York City and upstate New York, and runs a Diamond Approach book group in Canandaigua, New York. Jane provided very useful input to us while serving on our ED search committee this fall. She also serves on the Board’s Finance committee and the Ten Directions College of Teachers.

I’d like to thank EM3 members Don Shaw and Jordan Goodman for the wonderful programs they conducted at Guest House this fall for the Chester area community. Don performed a magnificent piano concert, including works by Bach, Mozart, and Scarlatti. If you ever have an opportunity to hear him play, do not miss it! And Jordan showed us why the national media have called him “America’s Money Answers Man”; his presentation was full of valuable advice on how to succeed financially in this economic climate. Both events were followed by free receptions with delicious refreshments.



*An advertisement for our meditation class. Photo by Leigh McCune.*

Thanks are also due to EM members Leigh McCune and Nancy Joly for teaching Guest House's weekly community meditation class, and Lisa Uihlein for teaching our weekly yoga class. Both classes regularly attract many local participants. We would like to continue to produce programs for the community; they are an excellent way for us to get to know Chester and its residents, and for them to get to know us. If you have any ideas for community programs, please pass them on.

Guest House has been very successful at serving our third-party clients, (non-Ridhwan groups that use us for their retreats.) These groups give our facility high scores on their feedback forms, and most of them rebook with us for their next retreat.

Our marketing efforts have been focused on groups that are looking for a retreat center and are searching the internet. However, we now would like to start pursuing groups that are meeting elsewhere but not actively searching for a retreat center. It is likely these groups have not seen our advertising on the internet, and may not even know we exist. We plan to contact them by direct mail and telephone, and show them why we can offer them a better experience than their current retreat center.

In order to do this, we need to find out who these groups are, and where they are meeting now. You can help us greatly by sending us the names of any groups you are aware of who hold retreats on a regular basis. You don't need to know anyone personally in these groups, or even where they are meeting; we can follow through with the rest of the research. Please email the names of any groups you are aware of to me at [lleonard4@gmail.com](mailto:lleonard4@gmail.com); or fill out a form at the front desk.

Your assistance is very much appreciated!

## Seasons Greetings from The Fund Raising Team!

The holidays are in full swing, and as everyone runs around eagerly preparing celebrations and shopping for presents, we find ourselves feeling concerned about a less-than-full stocking for Guest House. If you're reading this newsletter, chances are you've come to think of Guest House as a supportive oasis amid the insanity of the (un)real world. The blizzard of bad news rages outside: the lagging economy, the terrorist threats, ego-driven politics, war, famine, natural disasters. The list is endless. Yet inside the walls of Guest House we feel safe, held, focused on what really matters. It is a tiny opening in the chaos of the world through which truth is invited to arise. Won't you help us keep that door open?

The level of support we've received this year is way below what we had in our stocking last year at this time. We are nowhere near the target we budgeted for 2010. And that makes your contributions—small and large—more important than ever. Remember: it's not about simply supporting a building and the staff that runs it. Guest House plays host to many forms of exploration and inner work. Hundreds of people come through here, have real life experiences of truth and take them out into the world, hopefully affecting change in ways both minuscule and momentous. Your donations help keep that forward momentum going so that our facility can continue to support exactly that.



*Photo by Hameed Q.*

Please give. And please talk to your friends and encourage them to give. Convince them to donate to Guest House rather than buy you that iPad or yet another tacky tie. And remember Guest House in your will. Let's all support this wonderful welcomer of the truth, knowing that through its manifestation, the world is impacted. You'll feel better. They'll feel better. We'll definitely feel better. And the world will too. . . believe it.

Love and peace to all.

### From the Finance Committee

As we approach the end of our third calendar year, Guest House finances continue to solidify. Rentals to other groups are increasing, and we significantly surpassed our budget in this area during the third quarter of 2010. This more than offset the impact of Emerald Mountain groups' attrition. Some expenses are higher than budgeted, and contribution revenue is less than budgeted, both of which resulted in a small cash loss for the third quarter.

Looking toward 2011, we anticipate increased revenue from other groups using Guest House, as well as an exciting line-up of Guest House programs. Our new executive director, Steve Kennedy will build on Adam's success, and we will benefit from his extensive experience.

We still face several challenges, including successfully completing negotiations with the town of Chester about our real estate tax exemption, and raising enough contributions to support our continued work.

One of the pleasures of our work on the Finance Committee is our awareness of presence informing our working field, as we are guided in our efforts to bring Guest House into the world as a robust and viable support for the Work of the Diamond Approach and other sincere paths of inner work.

*Newsletter produced and edited by Michael Levien.*

### From the Facilities & Forest Committee

We have exciting news. Those shabby old sheets that have been hanging as curtains in the White Barn are coming down! Soon they'll be replaced by gorgeous iridescent, silk curtains that move between shades of deep blue and green depending on the way the light hits them. They are embroidered with spirals, a symbol with all sorts of powerful and beautiful ancient meanings—from the womb and fertility, to constant change, (hello dynamism!), to the evolution of the Universe. The Celts believed it also represented the ethereal radiating energy of growth, birth and the expansion of consciousness. No wonder Alia loved them.

You may have noticed that the parking lot was repaved. No more undesired bumping and jostling in your cars as you enter and exit.

We will soon install bulletin boards, probably by the elevator, where you can check on retreat-related information like private sessions and small group locations. There, you'll also be able to find fliers and postings of Ridhwan School events and other happenings related to our Work. Additionally we'll soon announce a new, more inclusive student art policy. The main feature will be two group shows a year—one devoted to EM artists' work, the other to art by EM3 students. Each will be up for two months and will be timed around the groups' retreat, and we'll have signage encouraging any visitors who come to Guest House to take in the exhibitions.



*Photo by Laura Way.*