



guesthouse

10 YEARS HOLDING THE SPACE

NEWSLETTER—2018: Volume 2



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A Silent Success

The silent retreat held at Guest House for Diamond Approach® (DA) students and their loved ones September 7-12 was a huge success. So much so that participants requested another in 2019. While that's unfortunately not possible, another retreat led by these esteemed DA teachers—Sandra Maitri and Eugene Cash—is already scheduled **for June 17-22, 2020 at Guest House.**



in alignment with the meditative atmosphere and a huge support for creating a field of inward turning. Guest House itself is beautiful. Each bedroom is lovely and so is the whole environment. Art is everywhere, reminding us of the grace and grandeur of our Being.”

“I’ve done a million retreats like this, both from a Buddhist and Diamond Approach perspective,” says Cash. “We felt total support. The support Guest House offers becomes part of the weave of the retreat itself. Everybody feels it, whether they know it or not.”

“We had a very rewarding experience teaching our first silent retreat at Guest House,” adds Maitri. “During the retreat, the on-site staff were

This is the first time Maitri and Cash have brought this retreat format to the East Coast. They offer it every year in California, always selling out. Its reputation preceded the retreat in Connecticut because, amazingly for a first-time event, the silent retreat was fully enrolled! A total of 56 people attended.

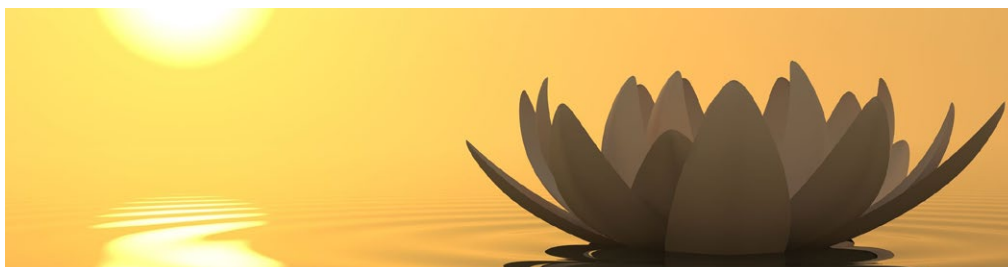
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GIVING CORNER

What a Year!

It’s been an amazing year at Guest House, as we celebrated our 10th anniversary! We commemorated this milestone with joy, gratitude and ritual. We’re happy as kids who just learned to ride a bicycle, and we’re looking at our beloved founder Alia Johnson, and saying, “Look! No hands!” Except, of course, that there have been many hands that helped us along the way, including yours, our donors’.

What do you support when you give? Fundamentally your own work in the world, of course. Guest House is a sacred container that holds your work and mirrors it back to you each time you return. You support great teachings, whether Diamond Approach or the wisdom of any of the myriad paths that intersect with the world through Guest House. You support the people who transmit these teachings. But this year we want to especially acknowledge the staff of GH, who graciously returns your support. Here’s one incredible way they did it this year:



Essential Contemplations

As we near the end of a smashing 10-year anniversary we have been thinking about what it means to grow, evolve and mature—as people, as board members, as a team and a mission-oriented retreat center. Other great minds have ruminated on this topic too. Here we offer just a few.

.....
“Caring—about people, about things, about life—is an act of maturity.”
—**Terry McMillan**

.....
“Learning lessons is a little like reaching maturity. You’re not suddenly more happy, wealthy, or powerful, but you understand the world around you better, and you’re at peace with yourself. [It’s] not about making your life perfect, but about seeing life as it was meant to be.”

—**Elisabeth Kübler-Ross**

.....
“One of the most beautiful things about spiritual maturity is that you see the divine in all its guises and you stop arguing about which ones are right.”

—**Adyashanti**

.....
“The impetus toward the realization... spontaneously emerges in consciousness as an important task for the psychologically and spiritually maturing human being. As maturity grows into wisdom in an optimally developing person, this task gains precedence over other tasks in life, progressively becoming the center that orients, supports and gives meaning to one’s life, ultimately encompassing all of one’s experience.”

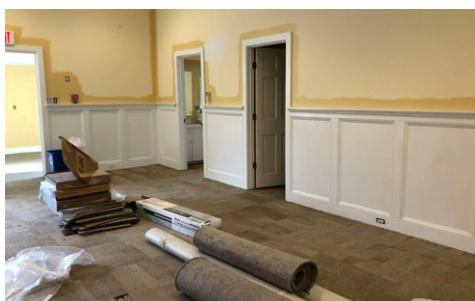
—**A.H. Almaas**

THE BEE’S KNEES No, that’s not a haz mat suit Nick’s sporting. Among the interesting donations this year—which included beautiful new furniture and a chandelier (to be installed soon)—was this sweet apiarist’s outfit. Nick’s always been our go-to pest control czar, but now he’s got the protective duds to give him true street cred! He can now safely capture and transplant hives of all kinds of buzzing creatures, from adorable honeybees to those nasty white-headed wasps.



FRESH FACES We had a handful of new hires in the recent past, filling out our amazing team. **Deb Vilcheck**, a resident of our very own Chester, who is now working part time in housekeeping. We’ve also hired several part-time students for our dining services: **Hannah Bowen** (attends Eastern Connecticut State), **Tim Luneau** (a junior at Haddam-Killingworth High) and **Braedi Smith** (senior at Valley Regional High). Additionally, we’ve brought **Lisa Johnson** on to help with our overnight front desk coverage. We’re happy to have you all on the team!

LOOKIN’ GOOD Our Longhouse meeting room has had a makeover thanks to staff downtime earlier this winter. (We used staff downtime back in 2013 to build our labyrinth!) Below we have some in-progress shots, showing the magnitude of the effort. Thanks to the staff for their hard work on beautifying a room that’s so popular amongst our groups.



Our Longhouse meeting room during the renovations process

ROOM AT THE INN Last year we successfully launched our AirBnB program in Parmelee House, tripling our personal retreat bookings. It’s a small part of our business, but every little bit helps. We’re expecting quadruple gains by end of year. Take a look at our openings and book your stay: guesthousecenter.org/Airbnb.



(Continued on page 6)

Guest House is Green(er)!

Sustainable, environmentally friendly practices are essential to our mission and are at the core of our business. It's an ongoing effort and our personal goal is to become greener and cleaner every day. Read below about some of our green certifications, initiatives and projects. You can find more info at guesthousecenter.org/green.

GREEN LODGING CERTIFICATION

Certified in 2009 and re-certified in 2017, Guest House is one of the first Green Lodging facilities in Connecticut. This effort involves all of our staff members working together to ensure Guest House is as environmentally friendly as possible. This certification touches all of our processes and systems: serving water in pitchers instead of bottles, using products made of recycled materials, avoiding disposable cups/plates/flatware, buying concentrated products in larger bulk containers, using Energy Star® appliances, applying paint with low or zero volatile organic compounds (VOCs), using green-certified cleaning products, maintaining high efficiency in our heating and cooling systems and much more. This is the overarching program that is the spark for the other initiatives we've undertaken.



just entered into an agreement to purchase wind-powered electricity through 2021.

SUSTAINABLE MINDSET

Reduce, reuse, recycle—in that order! People tend to forget that, and just recycle everything they can. However, recycling isn't quite the clean process we all want it to be just yet, so Guest House treats it as the last resort. We strive to use less by buying concentrated consumables in large bulk containers, or finding alternative solutions that produce less waste.



House has joined the Clean the World program to put these scraps to beneficial re-use. This program receives our guests' partially used soap, sanitizes it and redistributes it to needy populations around the world.

CLEANING PRODUCTS

Our housekeeping staff works diligently to make Guest House one of the cleanest facilities around. However, many cleaning products are not environmentally friendly and can negatively impact our waste stream, water table, or our guests and staff! To minimize these impacts, we have audited all of our cleaning products and, to the extent possible, we use green-certified products to protect of our staff, our guests, and our environment.



LEARN MORE
guesthousecenter.org/green

FOOD WASTE & COMPOST

By effectively managing our menu development and food preparation processes, our Dining Services team ensures that we generate as little prepared-food waste as possible. Starting in 2019, we will be using food preparation scraps (vegetable peels, egg shells, etc) as the fuel for our new composting program.

SUDS RECYCLING

A retreat center can generate lots of waste soap over the course of a year. We almost always find partially used soap bars left over in our guest rooms. Guest



EFFICIENT HEATING & COOLING

We are very close to completing our multi-year commitment of transitioning our guest rooms away from oil-heated, "all or nothing" HVAC systems. We are moving on to electric, energy-efficient "mini-split" style units. These are not only more efficient, but they also allow staff and guests to control the climate in all of our spaces individually. On top of that, moving away from oil means our wind-powered electrical provider goes even further toward global energy sustainability.



POWERED BY WIND

Connecticut is one of many states that allows residents and businesses to select their electrical power generators, making the money we spend on electricity an opportunity to vote for sustainable energy at the state and national levels. As part of our commitment to green practices, Guest House selects 100% renewable energy providers for its long-term energy contracts. We have



*Beyond Diversity 101 has been a longtime member of the Guest House family, first joining us all the way back in April of 2012. Since then, their five-day programs have been a winter-time staple of our retreat calendar. They come to Guest House to hold their intensive workshops, which seek to go beyond the typical “diversity training” that many may be familiar with. We spoke with **Lisa Graustein** (Facilitator) and **Niyonu Spann** (Founder, Facilitator) about the programs they hold at Guest House and their time with us.*

WHAT PROGRAMS DO YOU HOLD AT GUEST HOUSE?

Beyond Diversity 101 is series of workshops that seek to move beyond the patterns of diversity and oppression that show up in many diversity workshops and provide a place for growth, healing and transformation. Alongside that is CEIO (Co-Creating Effective & Inclusive Organizations) - a project to support community organizers and community-serving organizations to fully embody inclusivity, justice and conscious co-creation, thereby inspiring, encouraging and expanding the wider practice of these values within the communities they serve. Our work is currently concentrated in the Greater New Haven area.



Workshops in White Barn

WHAT IS THE OVERALL MISSION OF THE ORGANIZATION AND THE RETREATS?

The purpose of our workshops is to embody the healing justice and

transformational mindsets we are seeking to teach and offer to participants. As a participant for several years before becoming a facilitator, BD101 offered me the space to notice, understand, and shift how power and oppression were operating in myself and my communities. I gained the skills to interrupt and transform those dynamics in a space that believed in my wholeness and capacity to change.

FACEBOOK
fb.com/beyonddiversity101

WHAT WORK/ACTIVITIES ARE DONE IN SERVICE OF THAT? HOW DOES THAT CONTRIBUTE TO YOUR MISSION?

Our workshops are designed to model the principles we are teaching. We use traditional workshop activities – discussions, presentations, videos – along with dance, song, singing, movement, integrated bodywork and more. Our workshops are not simply places to discuss what one might do outside the workshop setting, but a place to fully experience how one can act in new ways that promote healing and justice as practice for being in those ways throughout our lives.

I first had the call to develop the Beyond Diversity 101 Intensive after some 10 years or so of working as a diversity workshop facilitator. I was beginning to see a disturbing pattern in myself and in my fellow trainers.



Lisa Graustein & Niyonu Spann

When we facilitators measured “success” during and after a workshop, it was frequently by a yardstick which correlated to the following: on one side, how guilty had the white folks—especially white men—been made to feel; and on the other side, had the people of color, women or some other designated oppressed group gotten sufficiently in touch with their pain and expressions of anger? I began to notice that many activities in our workshops were either geared to encourage oppressed groups to tell their story of victimization or to bring oppressor groups to the brink of tears and shame. I began to ask the question, “Is there anything beyond this cycle?” Beyond Diversity 101 seeks to answer that question – experientially.

—Niyonu Spann, Founder

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*New American Leaders (NAL) is a relative newcomer to Guest House, visiting us for the first time back in 2015. They returned this year and turned our heads as their goal seemed particularly relevant in our polarized times. They are an organization which prepares first- and second-generation Americans to run for political offices around the country. They came to Guest House not for one of their trainings, but for their annual staff retreat. We spoke with **Ron Simms**, Digital Communications Manager, about NAL and their time at Guest House.*

WHAT IS NAL? WHAT IS THE OVERALL MISSION OF THE ORGANIZATION?

New American Leaders is the only national, nonpartisan organization focused on bringing New Americans into the political process. We're leading a movement for inclusive democracy by preparing first- and second-generation Americans to use their power and potential in elected office. We believe that our democracy is stronger when everyone is included and everyone participates. Unfortunately, our elected government, from City Council to Congress, does not reflect our country's diverse population.



NAL staff at GH

WHAT DID NAL COME TO GUEST HOUSE FOR THIS YEAR?

We came to Guest House this year for our annual staff retreat. Most of our staff is made up of New Americans, some of whom are alumni of our training programs or have experience running for office or working on campaigns. They all share the goal of getting New Americans to run for office and win so that our elected officials mirror the makeup of our nation.



CAN YOU SHARE ANY SUCCESS STORIES FOR THE ORGANIZATION ON THE NATIONAL OR LOCAL SCALE?

So far we have trained over 650 people to run for office and win. Some of our alumni who have gone on to accomplish great things after our training include Catalina Cruz, the first Dreamer elected to public office in New York; Stephanie Chang,

VISIT THEM ONLINE
newamericanleaders.org

the first Asian American to serve on the Michigan State Legislature; Raquel Teran, who just won her election and will be joining other NAL alum in the Arizona House of Representatives; Chris Chyung, a 25 year old political newcomer who just unseated a three term incumbent in Indiana's 15th House District; and Sam Shim, who serves on the Worthington County School Board in Ohio.

IF A READER IS INTERESTED IN JOINING ONE OF YOUR PROGRAMS, WHAT IS THE FIRST STEP? WHAT IF THEY JUST WANT TO HELP?

We prepare first- and second-generation Americans to successfully run for office by offering training programs and events across the country. Our signature training program is Ready to Lead. The curriculum, specifically designed by immigrants for immigrants, shows trainees how to message, target, fundraise, embrace one's heritage and become a successful candidate. Trainings are held in the spring and summer in Arizona, New York, Washington, Michigan, Georgia, Southern California, and Nevada. Visit our website and apply today! If a reader would like to help, they can also visit our website to sign up for our mailing list and help get underrepresented Americans on the ballot and into power.

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GH News

(Continued from page 2)

GETTING WITH THE

PROGRAMS Buoyed by the success of our 2016 “On Being Human” fundraiser retreat (with Bob Ball & Jeanine Mamary)



The crowd gathered for the 2016 program

and the recent silent Diamond Approach retreat (with Sandra Maitri & Eugene Cash, see page 1), we’re planning two exciting programs for 2019 and 2020. Bob and Jeanine will lead a



Jeanine Mamary & Bob Ball

program about being in relationship, with tentative dates set for Sept. 13 through 15, 2019. And we’re just brainstorming on a weekend “summit” about living a conscious, spiritual life in our currently polarized world. Stay tuned for more news as it develops!

A Silent Success

(Continued from page 1)

Any silent retreat is physically rigorous, of course. So, DA teacher Jill Davey traveled from the San Francisco Bay Area to lead daily stretching and light yoga sessions, helping restore bodies tired out from hours of sitting and walking meditation. One student observed, “The yoga was absolutely necessary in saving the body. But more than simply rescuing the body from the effects of prolonged sitting, I found it opened the body, and this in turn helped open the soul.”



Sandra Maitri & Eugene Cash

“It was maybe the hardest workshop I have ever done,” observes participant and DA student Michael Landgarten, “but also as rewarding and impactful as any I have attended. By the third day I felt such intimacy with my inner experience. I now think quiet, kinesthetic inquiry is a critical aspect of the Diamond Approach. Since the retreat the experience of peaceful, relaxed, openness I had there seems consistently accessible.”



Diamond Approach teacher Annette Anderson, who traveled from Texas to attend, adds, “The retreat was designed to support me in moving into silence and away from the chatter of my mind, as well as deepening my meditation practice. By the end of the retreat, I found myself in a boundless state of pure awareness, which continued off and on over the next ten days. My object relations tended to fall away and there were times when I lost my usual sense of ‘self.’”

“We feel enriched by the devotion to practice and the life-changing effects experienced by so many of the participants during our retreat at Guest House,” says Maitri, adding, “We had a great time!” Stay tuned for updates on the 2020 retreat. But we strongly encourage everyone to set aside the time in your calendars now and register as soon as it’s open. If the success of this first retreat is a barometer, we have every reason to believe it’ll sell out again in 2020. Hope to see you there.

What a Year!

(Continued from page 1)

During the fall, torrential rains necessitated the evacuation of the Chester and Clinton downtowns. Parts of the Interstate were closed. With the ground already saturated from torrential deluges weeks before, our pumps couldn't keep up. Basement water levels rose to, at their highest, 24 inches. The in-house group was asked not to shower or flush for a couple hours. But, otherwise, operations hummed along and retreatants were none the wiser about what was an unmitigatedly disastrous flood. The staff labored through the night and all next day, sandbagging, wading calf-deep in muck, pumping, hand-bailing, mopping, running fans. This Herculean effort was all for you. The staff's primary concern is holding the space so that you can do your work. The lengths to which they go to keep the field of each retreat serene and undisturbed is simply astonishing. We're still cleaning up and assessing damage and reconstruction needs. But here's what staff members had to say about this test of their will:



Nick Schultz, one of our first responders, shin-deep in the flooded parking lot

Deki McKenney, evening front desk associate: *"We got to see what we are made of. As a whole and as individuals. We pull together, we don't fall apart, and we march forward with grace and determination. We got to see what our guests are made of. Dedicated to their work as well as gracious and devoted to GH. Those moments are priceless 'snapshots' of what GH is really all about. It is not a building, though that is part of it. It is really the building plus the staff/board plus our guests that make it a center of excellence!! Carry on!"*

Rich Kerrigan, facilities director: *"The key at the moment is to rely on each other, because we can. Thankfully, this all started with a staff where everyone cares for each other and has concern and empathy toward each other and a desire for excellence toward Guest House... Instead of looking around at destruction, we need to look around at the opportunities."*

We still have the potable water system and parking lot repairs to take care of this coming year. Now, however, Mother Nature has bequeathed us more immediate needs. We come for retreats but most of the year don't think about what our staff endures the rest of the time. These are the people who serve the mission of Guest House, the people who support you. They and their families are our family, and they are a big part of why your donations are important.

Please give generously this year.

Giving is Easier than Ever!

DONATE TODAY
guesthousecenter.org/give

Become a Monthly Sustainer Your donation will be automatically paid every month until you say otherwise. Go to our website's giving page, select your monthly contribution, and click "subscribe" to sign up. It's simple, and it gives Guest House a dependable base of support throughout the year.

Join the Guest House Legacy Circle For many of you who love Guest House but cannot afford to reduce your assets or current income now, planned giving offers a means to support Guest House in a significant way after your death by naming GH in your will or as a beneficiary of your IRA, savings account or life insurance. Please contact us at friends@guesthousecenter.org to learn more.

New American Leaders

(Continued from page 5)



Focused on the goal

FACEBOOK

fb.com/newamericanleaders

WHAT WAS YOUR FAVORITE ITEM FROM OUR KITCHEN?

Everyone really loved all the healthy, good options, including the large variety of salads. But our favorite item on the menu was definitely one of the chocolate desserts. We can't remember what the exact name was, but it was hit!

(Ed. Note—He is likely referring to the Chocolate Coconut Haystacks...)

Yoga Class @ GH

A warm welcome to **Leah Kisselbrack** who is now teaching a by-donation Kundalini yoga class each week here at Guest House! Drop by Mondays at 6pm and join in.



Beyond Diversity 101

(Continued from page 4)

HOW DO YOU MEASURE SUCCESS OF YOUR MISSION, AND HOW IS IT PROGRESSING IN THE WIDER WORLD?

We hear from many participants how their time at BD101 and what they learned are helping them release stuck patterns, change their organizations and fundamentally change how they are showing up in the world.

WHO ARE THE PARTICIPANTS THAT COME TO GUEST HOUSE?

The folks who show up to BD101 are a truly diverse group. We've had school administrators, foundation executives, recent high school graduates, social workers, therapists, activists, business people, performance artists, youth workers, teachers and professors, doctors, and many, many more people participate in our workshops.

COMMENTS ABOUT GH?

Guest House has been a great and welcoming home for many BD101 workshops. The lovely space, incredibly supportive staff, and delicious food make it a great container for doing deep and hard work. I have always appreciated all the work the staff does to make sure both facilitators and participants have what they need in order to be fully present to the workshop and the space to really rest and relax in a warm, homey space.

VISIT THEM ONLINE
bd101.org



IF SOMEONE IS INTERESTED IN JOINING ONE OF YOUR PROGRAMS, WHAT IS THE FIRST STEP?

We'd love to have you join us! Information about our upcoming workshops can be found online at bd101.org. Anyone is welcome to participate and we have funds available to make the workshop accessible.

WHAT WAS YOUR FAVORITE ITEM FROM OUR KITCHEN'S MENU?

I have always loved the food at Guest House and appreciate the wide array of delicious vegetarian options available. I can not pick one favorite item – too many to choose from.



The Beautiful Butternut

Although the butternut spends much of the year ignored, it returns to our kitchens alongside chilly November nights. There are many simple, delicious things you can do with a butternut squash. Although technically a fruit, butternut is typically prepared as a vegetable that can be roasted, sautéed, toasted, puréed or mashed. It grows with a hard outer shell, but can be commonly found in grocery stores pre-peeled.

Sample Preparations

CIDER POACHED BUTTERNUT SQUASH

(Alan's choice for Thanksgiving side dish)

- cut butternut into 1" dice
- place diced butternut in a pot
- cover with apple cider
- add a cinnamon stick and a sprinkle of salt
- poach until tender
- drain well
- mash with butter, honey, salt and pepper
- add warm spices if desired



HONEY ROAST BUTTERNUT SQUASH

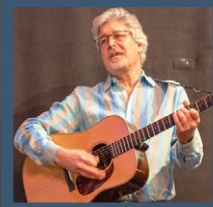
- cut butternut squash into ¾" dice
- toss with olive oil, salt and pepper
- place in a single layer on a lightly oiled sheet tray
- roast at 400°F until brown and tender
- drizzle with honey and serve

Don't be afraid to combine this with the poached butternut squash for a sweet and savory Thanksgiving dish

ROASTED BUTTERNUT & MULLED CIDER BISQUE

- sauté enough onions in butter to cover the bottom of your soup pot
- cut butternut into 1" dice
- toss with olive oil, salt, pepper, cinnamon, and a little bit of clove and ginger
- roast at 375°F until soft
- add to your soup pot with the sautéed onions
- cover with apple cider
- add a splash of orange juice and simmer for 15 minutes
- puree with stick blender
- add hot water as needed to bring the bisque to desired consistency
- add butter, and stir as it melts (roughly one stick of butter per squash)
- adjust salt and pepper, add bay leaf and more warm spices if desired

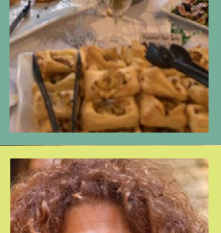
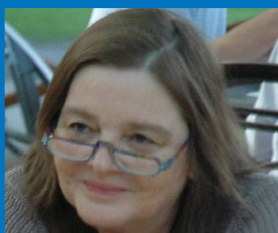
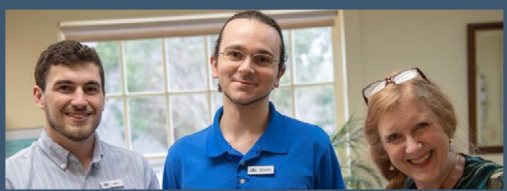




Guest House

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The first 10 years



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This newsletter is published by:
Guest House Retreat & Conference Center
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