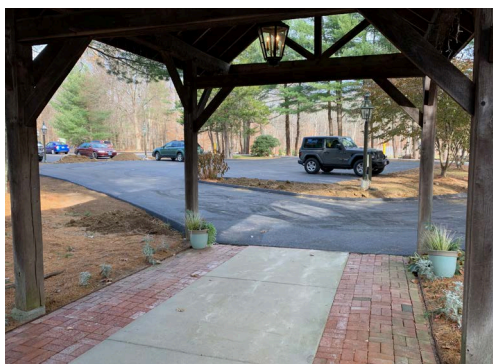
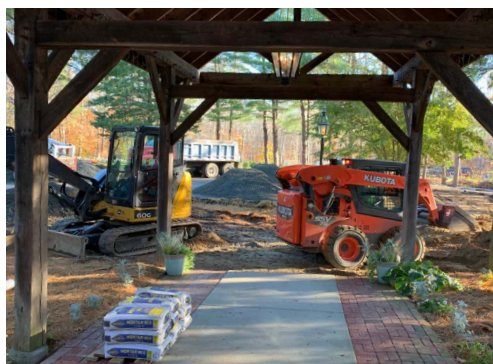


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## Parking Pizzazz



*Front entrance during and after construction.*

Thanks to the generosity of our donors, once again, and to facilities director Rich Kerrigan’s always impressive thoroughness of vision, Guest House has a new parking lot! Gone are the potholes and cracked pavement that rattled visitors’ bones as they entered and exited our retreat center. Gone, too, are the ice-skating rinks that formed in those potholes during winter and were becoming so large we could hold ice dancing championships in them.

What we see when we turn off West Main Street is a neatly laid layer of jet-black asphalt. And what we feel is a perfectly smooth ride. “This is going to be a game-changer for Guest House,” says Rich. “This long-needed facelift is going to benefit all of us in many ways. I am hopeful that this investment will lay the groundwork for solving a number of nagging problems that tend to go back to the basic fact that Guest House was built too low relative to the surrounding area.”



*A much smoother, safer walk between lots.*

The asphalt, however, is just the icing on the cake and gives no indication of the vastness and complexity of the project. The “nagging problems” Rich

*(Continued on page 6)*

### GIVING CORNER

## Annual Fund Campaign Underway

The holidays are here, and our hearts are filled with gratitude. So many of you supported the special Parking Lot Plus campaign and helped us surpass our goal. We asked you to help us raise \$60,000 of the total cost of \$160,000. You responded with \$70,000 in donations! Thanks to all who came through for Guest House on this vital and long-overdue renovation.

**DONATE TODAY**  
[guesthousecenter.org/give](http://guesthousecenter.org/give)

While this project has consumed our attention and resources, the mission and business of Guest House go on, and the challenge of our annual budget is ever-present. Each year we depend on your support to fund about 8% of our operating budget. We still need \$30,000 to reach our total donations goal to meet this year’s budget.

*(Continued on page 8)*

# Essential Contemplations

In this season of feasting, we look at what great thinkers have said about nourishment of all kinds.

.....

*"The nourishment of the body is food, while the nourishment of the soul is feeding others."*

—Ali ibn Abi Talib

*"I think preparing food and feeding people brings nourishment not only to our bodies, but to our spirits. Feeding people is a way of loving them, in the same way that feeding ourselves is a way of honoring our own createdness and fragility."*

—Shauna Niequist

*"The [essential] aspect of Nourishment is a kind of love; a gentle, delicate and lightly sweet presence. It has a warm sense of nurturance, and a unique quality of stilling inner hunger...It is the food absorbed from personal experience."*

—A.H. Almaas

*"As we need food, so do we need emotional nourishment: love, kindness, appreciation, and support from others."*

—Goswami Kriyananda

*"When we know about our ancestors, when we sense them as living and as supporting us, then we feel connected to the genetic life-stream, and we draw strength and nourishment from this."*

—Philip Carr-Gomm

*"Silence is the sleep that nourishes wisdom."*

—Francis Bacon

# GH News

**BRIMMING WITH TALENT** We've got some fresh faces—and skill sets—on staff. Please welcome two new full-time employees: **Tim Kosky** and **Kelly Augustin**. Tim is in facilities and is a lifelong Chester resident with years of fire-prevention and emergency-response experience. He lives on a small farm with his wife Cheryl. Kelly works in housekeeping and is father of two young children. He hails from Haiti and has lived in Connecticut for 10 years. Joining us part-time are prep cook **Victoria Como**, and high-schoolers **Keegan White** and **Matthew Thiel** in dining services. Welcome aboard lady and gents!



Tim Kosky



Victoria Como

**AND BABY MAKES THREE** Congratulations to **Dylan Moroch**, one of Guest House's lead cooks, and his wife, **Laurel**. On June 15th, their daughter **Olivia Jade "Bucky" Moroch** arrived into the world at 7 lbs. 14 oz. The nickname "Bucky" was Dylan's first choice for a name—but he couldn't get it past Laurel.



Olivia Jade "Bucky" Moroch

**COMING AND GOING** While we're in welcome mode, we'd like extend a hearty one to **Sherry Ruth Anderson**, who has taken over teaching duties from Rosanne Annoni in the Diamond Heart Retreat Group 5 (DHR5). Rosanne, a dearly loved and longtime friend of Guest House, has left to pursue her writing and asked Sherry to step into her shoes alongside John Davis. We're sorry to see Rosanne go—please visit, Rose!!—but we know DHR5 is in excellent, loving hands.



Sherry Ruth Anderson

(Continued on page 7)

# Life Worth Living

The **Live Worth Living** (LWL) retreat has become an interesting fixture of the early-year Guest House calendar. They gather here as the semester begins at the onset of February to prepare themselves for a course where they explore what a good life can be, and how to create it themselves. We caught up with **Matt Croasmun**, the group's coordinator, and asked him about the group's mission and experiences at Guest House.

## WHAT IS THE MISSION OF LWL?

The Life Worth Living Program exists to revive critical discussion about this most important question—what makes a life worth living? This question once came pre-answered—by culture, by religion, by tradition—but these days, we each have to ask and answer for ourselves: What is the good life? What does it mean to live a flourishing life? These are difficult questions that require intellectual muscles many of us have never developed; we need one another's help to ask and answer them well.

## VISIT THEM ONLINE

[faith.yale.edu/living](http://faith.yale.edu/living)

## WHY DOES LWL HOLD A RETREAT HERE?

The purpose of the retreats is for students to build a bond of affective trust early on in the semester, and to share aspects of their personal stories and future desires. By building this trust, they will use it as a foundation for deeper intellectual discovery later in the semester.



Group photo on the deck in Feb 2019.

## WHO ARE THE PARTICIPANTS THAT COME TO GUEST HOUSE?

Our 120 students! All Yale students of all four years of college, as well as a few grad students and our professors/instructors.

## HOW HAS THE COURSE BENEFITED FROM RETREATS?

GH has been a fantastic and welcoming space for our retreats. The energy and hospitality and seamlessness help facilitate an environment of open sharing and bonding amongst our students. The energy on the bus to the retreat is vastly different from the energy on the way back. People are jovial and excited to have built deep bonds with their classmates.

## HOW DOES GUEST HOUSE COMPARE TO OTHER SPACES?

GH is wonderful and seamless at accommodating our large groups, while still feeling intimate. Other venues usually have a trade-off between those two things.

## WHAT WAS YOUR FAVORITE ITEM FROM OUR KITCHEN?

The white chocolate cookies! I also heard many students raving about the salads, vegetarian options, and tea bar!

*Thanks again to Matt for sharing the LWL experience with us!*

## Course Description

*What does it mean for a life to go well? What would it look like for a life to be lived well? In short, what shape would a life worth living take? We will explore these questions through engagement with the lives and visions of founding figures from diverse traditions of imagining a good life: the Buddha, the Torah and the Hebrew prophetic and wisdom writers, Jesus of Nazareth, Muhammad, John Stuart Mill, and Friedrich Nietzsche. The course will also feature visits from contemporary individuals who understand their lives to be shaped by the traditions in question.*



In the last few years a new springtime retreat group has made Guest House its home: **Sound of New England Chorus**. They retreat here to hone their voices and skills in advance of a large choral competition each year. They roll their risers into the White Barn and sing their hearts out for a weekend both they and our staff have come to love. We spoke with their team about their retreats and their time at Guest House.

### WHAT IS SOUND OF NEW ENGLAND CHORUS?

Sound of New England Chorus is the West Hartford-based chapter of **Sweet Adelines International**, a worldwide music education organization for women that has 21,000 singers across the globe. Under the direction of Marion Devokaitis, our 30 members sing four-part a cappella harmony in the barbershop style. We perform choreographed show tunes, big band favorites, beautiful ballads, patriotic and holiday standards—a repertoire that includes something for everyone.



*Hamming it up for the camera!*

### WHAT DO YOU COME TO GUEST HOUSE TO DO?

Each spring, Sound of New England participates in the North Atlantic Region competition at Symphony Hall in Springfield, MA. We perform a two-song competition package, usually a tender ballad and a lively uptune with choreography. To

**VISIT THEM ONLINE**  
[soundofnewengland.org](http://soundofnewengland.org)

prepare for the competition, we have an annual retreat with a coach to polish our vocal production and performance skills. The goal of our chorus retreat is to have fun, work hard, strengthen our skills and be ready to shine when we hit the contest stage four to six weeks later.

### WHO ARE THE PEOPLE THAT MAKE UP YOUR GROUP?

Sound of New England is a warm, fun group of women who enjoy working and playing hard. We have great camaraderie and respect for each other, and it shows. We come from all walks of life, diverse backgrounds, and range in age from young mothers to grandmothers, working and retired. We are educators, nurses, physical therapists, artists, fundraisers, computer specialists, business analysts, and domestic engineers. In addition to demanding personal and work lives, some of our members also sing with church and community groups.

### CAN YOU SHARE ANY SUCCESS STORIES FROM YOUR RETREAT?

It is important that our chorus retreat location provide a positive and supportive atmosphere for our members, and we are thrilled to have found that in spades at Guest House in Chester. Sound of New England's retreat at Guest House in March 2019 was so successful that we won the 2019 Small Chorus Award and placed fifth overall, competing against choruses that were significantly larger than ours. We attribute that to the wonderful Guest House venue and staff, which enabled our chorus members to work hard, stay focused, have fun, eat well and sleep solidly in comfortable beds!

### HOW DOES GUEST HOUSE COMPARE TO OTHER SPACES?

We are grateful that Guest House accommodations are very comfortable with delightful furnishings, and meals are outstanding. It is

*(Continued on page 8)*



*Regional competition at Symphony Hall in Springfield, MA.*

# Quiet Thanks

**G**uest House is not flashy. She's been described as serene, simple, nurturing, welcoming, comfortable, gracious, warm. When you consider Rumi's poem, the source of her name, it doesn't seem a stretch to even call her wise. So, a neon sign out front or billboards in the parking lot would just seem out of place.

Yet there is so much gratitude that wants to be expressed within these walls and around this land. Gratitude for the hundreds of thousands of dollars in generosity of those who donated seed money for her purchase—some European Diamond Approach students who have never even been here or experienced her holding—and those who continue to selflessly give. This building and grounds hold profound thanks for those who, early on, brainstormed and prayed and searched with our founder, Alia Johnson, for an East Coast home. How can we show appreciation for all the board members and staff who navigated Guest House through many rocky years, often learning to steer this wild crazy plane in mid-flight?



And what about the mediums of our newfound knowledge and understanding: our teachers?

One discreet way to acknowledge the many souls that brought us Guest House are small, quiet plaques affixed to the bricks in the labyrinth that is nestled in our woods.

You can express your gratitude personally with your name, or offer anonymous thanks with, for example, a simple line of meaningful verse. You can commemorate the

teacher or the path that brought you here to do your work (the first plaques offered appreciation to Alia for her vision of Guest House). You can honor the soul of a loved one, inviting their spirit to rest by the labyrinth. There really are no boundaries except the number of characters that fit onto the plaque's 3.5" x 1" face.

**EMAIL FRIENDS OF GH**  
[friends@guesthousecenter.org](mailto:friends@guesthousecenter.org)



Plaques start at \$100 (+ \$22 to cover the cost of the plaque). There are other placement opportunities at the base of the dining deck's resplendent maple tree or on a bench in the woods. Should you feel called to express yourself in this way, please send us an email. Guest House thanks you.

# Parking Pizzazz

(Continued from page 1)

is talking about are mainly addressed under this thick black coating. This mammoth undertaking included:

- Trimming roots that were causing buckling of the asphalt, which in turn increased the risk to guests of tripping injuries as well as blocked or unfavorably redirected water flow
- Placing all underground wiring in conduits (some were live wires buried unprotected right under the soil!)
- Raising manhole covers that had sunk below ground level, necessitating chipping away at the thick ice layer that formed over them in winter to access them
- Rerouting and/or widening sections of driveway to better accommodate snowplows and delivery trucks
- Cleaning out and resuscitating clogged drainage systems
- Regrading and building up curbs to redirect water to our fire pond (and away from the driveway)
- Facilitating guest access and eliminating historic areas of ponding and icing near parking areas and entries
- And, of course, repaving



*Roots during and after construction.*



*On the left, the freshly reshaped main entrance. On the right, no potholes!*



*Manholes before and after construction.*



*Rich "The Man" Kerrigan overseeing work.*

Moreover, explains Rich, this project represents a new measure of sustainability for Guest House. It is, he says, "the third instance of something new to Guest House's evolution: intentional improvement and planning, as opposed to forced reaction." The first two instances were the domestic hot water system replacement and the potable water system replacement (see "Drink Up" item in this issue's GH News section, page 7). "We are happy to finally be in a position to be thinking



*A whole new first impression.*

ahead rather than orbiting in crisis management mode." Thanks to everyone who helped make this a reality! And enjoy the new ride.

# GH News

(Continued from page 2)



*Not only does the gym have all new flooring, we managed to make it much larger.*

**GYM DANDY** Our gym, which was completely destroyed by the severe flooding last year, is back up and running, now with a new eco-friendly rubber floor made of recycled tires. Slip on your sweats and sneakers and work those abs and biceps with full confidence that we've kept some 75 tires from reaching landfills.

**TALKING TRASH** In our ongoing effort to be conscious stewards of our planet, Guest House has started composting kitchen scraps. The new triple-bin system is super fancy and has incredible capacity, enough to handle all our compostable waste from serving 3,000-plus guests a year. It doesn't include animal products, fat, etc.—it's just vegetable matter we'll be plowing back into the soil.



**DRINK UP!** The next time you pour yourself a glass of fresh well water at Guest House, please take a moment to thank all those who donated to replace our potable water system. And if you are one of those, raise a glass to yourself! Because of you, and facilities director Rich Kerrigan's beautifully thoughtful and thorough system design, as of July 3<sup>rd</sup> this year we've been drawing exceptional *eau* from a gleaming new 5,500-gallon, lined steel tank discreetly buried by the Sun Room patio. It holds a two-day supply of treated, ready-to-drink water. So go ahead...pour yourself another one.



*Our new water tank is longer than White Barn.*

## Maitri-Cash Silent Retreat Booking Up Fast!



Based on the tremendous success of their first silent retreat at Guest House in 2018, seasoned Diamond Approach teachers Sandra Maitri and Eugene Cash are returning for this six-day deep dive into the soul. It is an opportunity to immerse oneself in an extended period of meditation guided by the orientation of this unique spiritual path.

### SIGN UP TODAY

[guesthousecenter.org/Silent](http://guesthousecenter.org/Silent)

**WHEN:** June 17-22, 2020

**ROOM & BOARD:** \$750 - \$1,085

**COMMUTER:** \$390 (*by request*)

**TUITION:** \$480

“*This was an amazing opportunity to unplug from my screens, electronics, schedule, social environment and expectations, and all of life's distractions, and to become aware of new aspects of myself and of reality.*”

—2018 Participant



# Sound of New England

*(Continued from page 4)*



*Exhausted but exhilarated at the conclusion of our annual Retreat weekend at Guest House!*

not possible to mention just one favorite item from the kitchen menu. Everything was noteworthy including the homemade granola, fabulous salads, yummy roasted veggies, salmon cooked to perfection, delicious sorbets, coconut macarons and, of course, the warm gluten-free cookies at check-in.

## HEAR THEM SING

[youtube.com/watch?v=jll7sHDFn2s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jll7sHDFn2s)

### DO YOU HAVE ANY STORIES FROM YOUR TIME WITH OUR STAFF?

Far and away the most memorable event at our Guest House retreat in March 2019 was when our coach surprised the chorus by inviting a handsome young male staffer into our rehearsal space so we could perform for him. After initially blushing, Bart handled himself impressively with 30 women singing "Love Letters Straight from Your Heart" to him. We look forward to singing our new ballad to another lucky staffer in March 2020!



*Our coach and Guest House's own good sport, Bart, who was kind enough to help us deliver our message from the heart.*

*Thanks again to the Sound of New England team for sharing their experiences—and their music!—with us.*

## Annual Fund Campaign Underway

*(Continued from page 1)*

For everyone who comes to Guest House—over ten years, or three years, or for the first time this year—we hope you think of Guest House as your home for your work. This is our mission, the reason we are here: to support you, your work, and your experience of being here. Each year your donations help everyone who comes to Guest House—not only your retreat group. By donating to Guest House you directly support each and every guest.

### DONATE TODAY

[guesthousecenter.org/give](https://www.guesthousecenter.org/give)

Not everyone needs to give a large amount of money. Whatever you give helps Guest House thrive. And we offer many ways to make giving as easy as possible. These include annual donations, monthly sustaining donations, naming Guest House as a beneficiary in your IRA or will, purchasing a commemorative plaque for a loved one (see "Quiet Thanks" on page 5 for more information), and more. Find what works best for you, and help Guest House remain the welcoming, supportive home that helps you dive deeply into what is most important to you.

We hope you have a safe and loving holiday season.



# Of Peanut Butter and Cook Books

In January of 2019 we began work on the GH cookbook, "Cooking at Guest House." Progress has been slow with the banner year we've had, but now that winter is here, we've got some time to sit down and dive in. Continuing has been made easier with the assistance of the kitchen's newest prep cook, Victoria Como, who has excellent talent for this type of writing and understands what Alan and his team do. In this edition we wanted to share a section of the book's introduction and a frequently requested recipe: **Gluten-Free Peanut Butter Truffles**.

## Cookbook Snippet

Cooking at Guest House is driven by gratitude. When a guest asks, "What does it take to make this ratatouille?" our response is that it doesn't take anything. It gives! It gives us the opportunity to spend the first few hours of the workday mulling in the aroma of caramelized onions, and the last few moments of the morning getting our hands on fresh thyme and oregano. This book aims to share that attitude of gratitude with our guests through words the same way we do every day through food. Our tips and tricks for the kitchen may consist of a few techniques and measurements, but if you only get through this intro before putting down this book and getting your own hands on some fresh herbs, our job is done here.

## Gluten-Free Peanut Butter Truffles



Makes ~18 cookies

- 1 cup peanut butter
- 1 cup brown sugar
- 1 egg
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 cup semi-sweet chocolate chips

Combine all ingredients

Spoon onto parchment-covered tray

Flatten slightly with a fork

Bake at 350°F for 8-10 mins



## Technique

*Let's talk about ice cream scoops. These wonderful little devices are our tool of choice for making cookies. They are not just good for ice cream and cookies, though! You can also make wonderful use of this tool for meatballs, cupcakes, muffins, stuffings and fillings.*



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This newsletter is published by:  
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318 West Main Street, Chester, CT 06412

[info@guesthousecenter.org](mailto:info@guesthousecenter.org)

860.322.5770

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