



# Insight Meditation Society

## Sangha News - Summer 2009

### Mindful Living

*From Bob Agoglia, Executive Director:* Each summer sees a hive of activity at IMS as all of our staff prepare for and support a diverse and busy season of retreats. Courses have recently taken place at the Retreat Center for people of color, teens, families and young adults, while at the Forest Refuge, Vietnamese monastic Bhante Khippapanno taught throughout July.



I am frequently touched by the dedication of staff as they intentionally offer their service. They are here to grow - they understand that their working lives present countless opportunities for transforming their minds and hearts. In turn, this conscious effort helps deepen the sense of refuge that our retreatants can count on while practicing here.



It was in this context of transformation that I interviewed senior teacher Larry Rosenberg last month while he was teaching at IMS. He has led courses for over 30 years, so I took advantage of his presence and experience to interview him about living mindfully. I wanted to explore if mindfulness is the same, whether we're on or off the cushion. Listen [here](#) to his response.

### Environmental Improvements

*Also from Bob:* As many of you know from personal experience, the need for environmental improvements to the Retreat Center dormitory building known as 'the Catskills' has been growing steadily stronger. Despite the fact that current global economic conditions are still far from robust, IMS is planning to renovate all three floors sometime in late 2011/early 2012. Over the next couple of years, we will be inviting our community of friends and supporters to participate in a Capital Campaign to raise the necessary funds.

When completed, the wing will feature new bedrooms and bathrooms that will offer greater privacy. In addition, the building envelope will allow for significantly increased energy conservation and reduction of our carbon footprint.

But this is a couple of years away. More immediately, we have removed the carpet that leads down into the Gym area from the back of the dining room and are performing general repairs to prevent moisture absorption and retention.

In the Gym itself (the basement floor of the Catskills), we plan to operate a quiet exhaust system underneath the accommodation rooms and to paint various surfaces. These measures will provide environmental enhancements until we can go ahead with a full renovation.



### News Worth Noting

**Moving On** - Myoshin Kelley, teacher-in-residence at the Forest Refuge since it first opened in 2003, will be leaving her position in December. Together with her husband Edwin, she will be moving to Minneapolis, helping to establish a new center there for their Tibetan teacher, Mingyur Rinpoche.

During their 15 years here in Barre, both have been active members of the IMS community. Edwin was on staff for much of that time, including seven years as executive director. Myoshin is known to many as a beloved teacher and spiritual friend. Both will be dearly missed!

Although moving on from her teacher-in-residence role - one that involved overseeing much of the Forest Refuge program - we're happy to say that Myoshin will be returning to the Forest Refuge as a visiting teacher in 2010.



**Web Developments - Podcasts of teachers' talks** given at both the Retreat Center and the Forest Refuge can now be found directly through iTunes, in addition to being available on our own [dharma.org](http://dharma.org) [audio page](#). Thank you to [Dharma Seed](#) for providing this service.

If you have iTunes installed on your computer, you can easily subscribe to [Retreat Center talks](#) and [Forest Refuge talks](#), and prepare to delight in our teachers' wisdom and compassion, straight from the IMS meditation halls.

A year ago, we ran a survey in *Sangha News* about whether online social networking would be helpful for connecting our far-flung community, especially post-retreat. Based on your responses, a pilot is now underway on Facebook for those who participated in this year's retreat for 18-32 year olds.

Do you know you can **pay your balance online**, before you arrive for your Retreat Center course or Forest Refuge stay? By completing the form on our [Pay Your Balance](#) page, your registration process on arrival at IMS can proceed more smoothly and allow you to settle into your retreat environment with greater ease.

**Buddha Grove** - As the first stage in creating a more fitting and beautiful setting for the Forest Refuge meadow Buddha, masons crafted a substantial fieldstone foundation last month for the statue to sit on. Almost all of the stones are from the Refuge grounds. At a later point trees will be planted, so that within a few years the Buddha will sit in a sheltering grove.



**New Welcome Center** - During the recent renovations to the Retreat Center lower walking room, a space was built specifically for mindful movement. This has allowed us to transform the old yoga room off the main foyer into a welcome center. On opening days the room is now filled with bustle and excitement as we register those who are

arriving for retreats. On closing days, retreatants can come here to browse the free materials and purchase books, all attractively displayed and easily accessible on newly-built shelving.



**Reflection Pond** - As a next step in upgrading our woodland trails, a generous donor has given funds to install a series of wooden walkways along the inner trails around the Reflection Pond. Yogis can now enjoy a complete circuit of the pond, undaunted by the threat of mud!



### Program Highlights

**Silence and Simplicity** - Ever since IMS began, our teachers and staff have given careful consideration to creating particular conditions most conducive to retreat life - conditions that allow the deepening of tranquility, kindness and understanding. Silence and simplicity stand as two core pillars of the IMS retreat culture and provide the framework for stepping back from the busyness and complexity of our lives and moving into a quieter way of being and living.

Since walls are thin at IMS and everyone lives together in close community, a willingness to embrace the silence and simplicity helps us all. In this spirit, we ask that while on retreat, please turn off cell phones and leave behind laptops, iPods and other communication devices.

Please notify our office if communication with fragile or dependent family members may be needed during a retreat.



**Recent Retreats** - At the Forest Refuge, lineage masters Bhante Gunaratana and Bhante Khippapanno warmly greeted each other in early July.



This month, Annie Nugent and Sky Dawson are offering the teachings.



The following images capture the themes of community, kindness and tranquility during recent Retreat Center courses.



*People of Color retreatants gather together on closing day in the meditation hall.*



*Family Retreat teacher Ajahn Kusalo, a monk of the Thai forest meditation tradition, is served a meal by young participants.*





*IMS's retreat for ages 18-32 offers tools for awakening and skills for living.*

**Future Courses** - At the **Retreat Center**, some space is still available in a 5-day study and practice retreat for experienced students. [The Seven Factors of Awakening](#), August 29 - September 3, will be taught by Christina Feldman and John Peacock.

Space is also available in a weekend course for caregivers, open to anyone in a caregiving role, whether looking after family members or working in the field. Taught by Sharon Salzberg and Susan O'Brien, [A Resilient Heart](#), September 10-13 will provide meditation tools to better manage stress and compassion burnout. Five nursing contact hours will be offered.

An [Insight Meditation Weekend for Scientists](#), September 17-20, follows. Led by Joseph Goldstein, Sharon Salzberg & Susan O'Brien, it is open to academics, researchers, therapists and others involved in the broad area of the mind sciences. Towards the end of the retreat, there will be time for discussion of various meditation research projects.

A 5-day concentration course in the style taught by Pa Auk Sayadaw will be offered December 18-23. Led by Marcia Rose and Pat Coffey, [Wise Concentration: Steadying the Mind](#) will help us cultivate concentration and develop purification, tranquility and equanimity.

At the **Forest Refuge**, there are still some spaces for a [personal retreat](#) from late September onwards.



### Staff Sangha

**Our Cooks** - Over the decades, a great deal of planning has gone into the nutritious meals we serve at IMS. These are designed to support a practice environment - after all, eating is usually an important highlight of a retreat day! We thought you'd like to see the faces behind our delicious food: the Retreat Center and Forest Refuge cooks.



*Retreat Center cooks - L-R, back row: Zack Barnes, John Francis, Assistant Kitchen Manager Pete Baker, Kitchen Manager Brett Ahlstrom and Peter Mauk; front row: Nancy Lonnergan and Sarah Stroud.*



*Forest Refuge cooks - L-R, back row: Scott Koeze, Melissa Magane and Pete Baker; front row, Heather Maloney with Brett Ahlstrom.*

**Job Opening** - Please consider joining the staff of IMS - we are currently seeking a [maintenance worker](#) for our Facilities department. We offer a warm and friendly community in service of awakening. For more information, please contact Kelly Collett at [hr@dharm.org](mailto:hr@dharm.org).







Until our next issue, may peace, joy and equanimity prevail.

For an archive of *Sangha News* and links to its audio interviews, click [here](#).

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*IMS is a spiritual refuge for all who seek freedom of mind and heart. We offer meditation retreats rooted in the Theravada Buddhist teachings of ethics, concentration and wisdom. These practices help develop awareness and compassion in ourselves, giving rise to greater peace and happiness in the world.*

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