



THE SHAMBHALA MEDITATION
CENTER
OF ST. JOHNSBURY

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DECEMBER NEWSLETTER 2005

CO-DIRECTORS INTERVIEWED:

The Executive Committee met 11/29/05 to consider the nomination of Ric Walter and Gerry Haase for Co-Directors of the Shambhala Center of St. Johnsbury. It was decided at the beginning of the meeting that the Executive Committee would make a decision tonight to accept or decline Ric and Gerry as Co-directors on the basis of their considered plans for the Center.

Ric accepts for at least a three year commitment. His aim is to cultivate leadership in the community. He feels leadership must be everyone's responsibility for natural succession to happen. Ric's areas of interest are organization, process and finances. He wants to meet with Department Heads before Executive Committee meetings so they can be more concise.

Gerry accepts for a one year commitment with the potential to roll over to more, one year at a time. Gerry and Ric are strongly in favor of staggered terms for co-directors so transition periods are smoother and easier. Gerry's areas of interest are regional Center work with Burlington, White River Junction, etc. visiting teachers, and Executive Committee Departments becoming committees rather than just a single person. He is committed to making the Center accessible.

Ric and Gerry want to make sangha feel included and needed. They want each Executive Committee Department Head to let them know what roles they have taken over from the former co-directors and to meet individually with each of them. They made it clear they are accessible for questions and concerns. A formal oath ceremony of office and reception date will be announced.

FROM THE DÉCOR DEPARTMENT:

The Dictionary defines the word décor, a French word, as beauty, elegance, ornament.

The décor position at the St. Johnsbury Shambhala Center was established a few years ago to provide some vision of how the space should look to both it's members and to people who come into the center for the first time. It was also agreed upon that, in order to maintain that vision, one person would decide what went into the space and where.

What is the image we would like to project to people who come to our Shambhala Center? What should it tell them about who we are as practitioners of the dharma? Is this a welcoming place full of joy and peacefulness where anyone who enters can experience their own mind? To experience one's mind there needs to be space. We know this from meditation practice. We cannot really get to know ourselves and our emotions if we have lots of thoughts running around in our heads.

This is my view of the décor of the Shambhala Center space. Let people feel the space when they walk in the door and within that, experience their own basic goodness and the collective basic goodness that exists in our sangha.

How do we do this from a practical point of view? Years ago the Druk Sakyong defined Shambhalian furniture as having an elegant, simple and sleek appearance. It should be functional, does not need to be expensive and would follow the traditional style. This means... well I don't need to tell you what simple and elegant means. More than what it looks like, does the piece tend to fill up the space? We have quite a large open space to decorate and the idea is not to fill it but to allow the space to come in and mix material with space.

This is done in the Japanese art of flower arranging, Ikebana. Western flower arranging tends to fill the space with flowers, which is very beautiful as well, but the Japanese style is to create space within the arrangement for all of us to enjoy or at least experience. Remember creativity can only come out of space.

Thank you for letting me share my vision with you. We have not always had the resources to completely decorate the space but as time went by we were able to buy a few select pieces like the coffee table and the two teachers chairs. If you have any suggestions I would be happy to hear them. We might not be able to implement them immediately but I will keep your ideas in mind.

“Shambhala vision is trying to provoke you to understand how you live, your relationship with ordinary life.” *

*(Shambhala: The Sacred Path of the Warrior, by Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche, 1984.)

PRACTICE & EDUCATION:

“The Union of Shamatha and Vipashyana” A community practice weekend, December 2-4, led by Acharya Michael Greenleaf

According to the Buddha, true meditation practice includes either cultivating mind's inherent stability (Shamatha), or arousing mind's capacity for insight (Vipashyana). Shamatha is said to be common to other traditions. Vipashyana is the practice of contemplative insight distinguishing the Buddhist tradition.

The union of Shamatha and Vipashyana is said to be essential for overcoming the confusion of ego and discovering our awakened nature or basic goodness as human beings.

In this workshop we will explore the practices of peaceful abiding and arousing insight. Questions to be addressed include: What is the nature of mind at rest and the distracted mind? What allows the mind to settle in its inherent stability and what are the obstacles to this?

What are the modes of insight and how is insight aroused? What is joined when peaceful abiding and insight are in union? What is the role of a daily discipline, daily life and periodic retreats? The format includes talks, discussion, meditation, instruction as well as contemplative exercises. The workshop is open to anyone with an interest in deepening his or her practice and understanding of meditation.

Acharya (or “senior teacher”) Michael Greenleaf is a practitioner in the Shambhala Buddhist tradition and a student of Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche and Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche. Acharya Greenleaf has been a faculty member for the Shambhala Vajrayana Seminaries since 1999. He is a member of the core faculty at Karma Choling Shambhala Buddhist Retreat Center. He has twice been a member of the residential staff at Karma Choling, in the 1970's and again in the 1990's with his wife Jeanine. He and Jeanine live in West Barnet, Vermont.

Schedule: Friday 12/2 7pm Talk (Open to all)
Saturday, 12/3 9am-5pm Sunday, 12/4 9am-4pm + reception<

Cost: \$75, sliding scale for those in need.

Please call or email Catherine Clark, Coordinator, for further information (802 592 3102/ceclark@sover.net) Registration is available at the Shambhala Center including Friday evening, December 2nd. To pre-register please contact Vickie Schafer at 802-633-3939.

MISSION ACCESSIBLE:

On finding myself completely lonely without a place to regularly practice with my community brothers and sisters, I was in despair. And as all human experiences are basically good, this sad one had some potential and led to a gesture of correcting the dilemma. We must at some point, hopefully sooner rather than later, be in a space that is, or can be made, universally accessible so that persons with mobility or other impairments or disabilities that prevent them from accessing the dharma because of physical barriers might be included.

So I asked to be able to have my donation seed an account that would guide us toward that end. At the same time, it arose that the Center was in some dire financial straits and I was asked if I would mind using this donation toward the general fund. My initial response was, certainly, I will respond to the emergency.

On further reflection, however, I realized that this is the way we have been dealing with our finances in our community since day one (for me that was 33 years ago). We are always responding to a crisis. I made the decision to be true to my initial inspiration and gamble on our sense of purpose and forward vision for us, which includes stable finances and the ability to become an accessible center for all who wish to enter this glorious path. So I asked to have this new account opened. We can stabilize ourselves by just doing so. We can anchor our vision with a tiny seed. Others present when I asked at the Executive Committee meeting to do this jumped in to match the donation so we now have a nice little something to be put toward making our next space a universally accessible Shambhala center.

With great fondness for you all and faith in the GES vision of Shambhala world,
Sarah Catherine LittleFeather

MEANINGS:

Oscar Garcia likes words. He wants to know which Buddhist and Shambhala terms that are used around the Center-- have intrigued, confused, or tickled your curiosity.

We will begin to publish a dharma vocabulary definition section in our Newsletter, with your help.

So, please send words whose meaning has interested you to: Oscar Garcia at karma_shedrup@yahoo.com We will share the words and meanings you propose to him in subsequent Newsletters.

DHARMA ART SHOW:

On Friday the 16th from 6 to 7pm there will be a reception and slide show of photography by David Wilde. Dynamic, vivid imagery captures the brilliance in the details of our everyday surroundings revealed in the interplay of the energies of form and color awakening appreciation for the power in the simple clarity of things around us. At least that's the aim. Come see if it works for you.

PERSONNEL:

Executive Committee:

- Ø Co-Directors: Gerry Haase & Ric Walters
- Ø Practice: Catherine Clark
- Ø Study: Marybeth Furr
- Ø Shambhala Training: open
- Ø Membership: David Wilde
- Ø Finance: Vickie Schafer
- Ø Facilities: Michael Taney
- Ø Publicity: open
- Ø Secretary: Linda Warner
- Ø Rusung: Michael Taney
- Ø Dekyong: Merle Thompson
- Ø Hospitality: Ken Campos

Service Personnel:

- Librarian: open
- Shrine Keeper: Alan Boye & Julie Swan
- Recycling: open
- Communications: David Wilde