

## **SnowFlower Sangha Annual Business Meeting**

Monday, July 27, 2009 from 6:30 – 9:00 PM at Friends Meeting House

**Facilitator:** Suzanne Kilkus, president; assistance with process: Cheri Maples, former president.

**Present:** Maureen Brady, Robert Chapman, Kate Edwards, Stephen Fleck, Lisa Glueck, David Haskin, Chuck Heikkinen, Linda Jordan, Walt Keough, Suzanne Kilkus, Cheri Maples, Mary Michal, Karuna Namenwirth, Micha Namenwirth, Susan Pearsall, Jane Peckham, Jon Reed, Celeste Robins, Carol Rubin, Leah Samson-Samuel, Steven Spiro, Susan Spiro, Savitri Tsering and Sherry Wachholz.

Minutes taken by Lisa.

### **Scholarship Recommendations:**

Carol presented the Steering Council recommendations regarding scholarships and use of surplus funds. After some discussion, the Sangha agreed to accept the committee's recommendations:

- Some scholarship assistance will be offered for local, regional and national retreats offered by SnowFlower, its sister sanghas, and Thay's national retreat.
- Maximum scholarship for local and regional retreats is 85% of retreat cost; maximum scholarship for a national retreat is \$250.
- The only criteria for local and regional retreats is financial need; additional criteria for national retreat is six months prior SnowFlower participation.
- If we have more applicants than available funds, names will be drawn: one hat for age 30 and under, one for remaining applicants.
- Approximate scholarship allocation assuming \$2,000 total (but depending upon amount of surplus):
  - \$1,200 for SnowFlower's annual retreat (maximum of nine 85% scholarships)
  - \$300 for regional retreat (maximum two 85% scholarships)
  - \$500 for national retreat (maximum two scholarships)

We voted that all surplus money will be allocated to scholarships and to the Love and Understanding Project, with 75% going toward scholarships and 25% to Love and Understanding. There was some concern expressed that this plan will preclude SnowFlower's donating to local non-profits. It was decided that this issue can be revisited at the next Annual Business Meeting.

### **Council and Project Reports**

- a. CTC – Care Taking Council: Susan Pearsall described the activities of the CTC, including being concerned with the comfort and well-being of Sangha, welcoming and mentoring newcomers and supporting Kalyana Mittha groups. She mentioned the need for three new members.
- b. SC – Schedulers' Council: Steven Spiro talked about the responsibilities involved in being a part of the Schedulers' Council, which involves lining up presenters for the Sangha meetings. The scheduler for a particular two-month period helps to select topics for the evenings, finds people who are willing to lead, and supports those leaders. Five new members are needed for the Schedulers' Council.
- c. STC – Steering Council: Savitri described the roles and responsibilities of the STC, including planning the Annual Business Meeting, election of officers, determining which issues need to be brought to the entire Sangha, making legal and budgetary decisions affecting the entire Sangha and conflict resolution. One new member is needed from the Sangha at large.

### **Love and Understanding Project**

- a. Informational report – Jon Reed: SnowFlower Sangha is taking a leading role in assisting with the Plum Village Love and Understanding Project. Jon has worked with David Nelson, who produced a DVD about the project. This DVD will be part of a packet to be available for Sangha to view, and also to be shared at the Estes Park Retreat. This DVD will be intended to increase awareness about the project and to encourage participation in the project both in our own sangha and in other sanghas.
- b. Mary Michal described how the Love and Understanding Project helps people in the poorest and most rural villages in Vietnam. It provides funding to build wells and schools, and to feed young children. This is a way we can give a gift to Sangha at large.
- c. We voted to strongly encourage members of SnowFlower Sangha to send their donations to a single SnowFlower member, who will record the amounts and send the donations

on to Blue Cliff. This will allow us to have a sense as a Sangha of our collective donation. Information about who has given will be kept strictly confidential. Checks should be made out to the Unified Buddhist Church. If you have any questions, please bring them to a member of SnowFlower Sangha's Love and Understanding committee: Chuck, Delia, Jon R., Linda J., Margot, Steven S. Susan S., Susan O., and Sherry W.

- d. We also voted to send out one request for donations per year from the Love and Understanding Project. We decided that this would be most appropriately done through the mail rather than on the listserv.

### **Request for Volunteers**

Mary M. explained the sign-up process for vacancies on councils, and for participation in projects and other opportunities. We then had a break to allow people to sign up for vacancies.

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### **Vacancies filled or still available:**

**Steering Committee (STC):** Chuck signed up for the single three-year vacancy

**Care Taking Council (CTC):**

Steve F. (at large, three-year commitment), Leah (at large, one-year commitment, replacing Susan S.), Don K. (Friday night representative, three-year commitment)

**Scheduler's Council (SC):**

**Friday Sangha:**

\*July - August: Linda Jordan (three-year commitment)

\* September – October: Steve Fleck (three-year commitment)

**Tuesday Sangha:**

\*May – June: Cheri (three-year commitment)

\*November – December: Saviitri (three-year commitment)

\*March – April: Volunteer still needed

### **Coming Home Project**

Cheri gave an update about our local social service project, designed to give support to prisoners and those being released back into the community. She gave credit to Carol R. for starting the project, and also mentioned that Steve F., Walt, and Kate are working hard with her on the project. The name, "Coming Home" is meant to imply coming home to yourself as well as your community.

Initially, three groups were formed:

- a. Education in prisons – The plan was to teach a 10-week mindfulness meditation class at Oak Hill. However, the warden has backed down on her initial interest due to staffing concerns. Therefore, we will be pursuing Columbia (maximum-security prison) in the near future. The other component of the education project is the non-violent communication class, called “Healthy Relationships and Healthy Communication”. This class, being taught by two members of the Alliance for Compassionate Justice, will begin in September.
- b. Circles of support – Circles of support are designated to provide support to people reintegrating back into their community. Our current circle is a combination of members of SnowFlower and Madison Insight and is being run in partnership with the Time bank and Mum. We have begun one circle for a man who has been released from Thompson. beginning in September, will teach a form of non-violent communication.
- c. Tutoring – Although this was initially designated to be a third component, the people who signed up for this component are limited to a couple of people who are working with a staff person from the ARC House.

In summary, the Coming Home Project now has three components: Circles of support for returning prisoners, meditation/mindfulness classes to be scheduled in the future, and non-violent communication classes. The first non-violent communication class will be scheduled for ten weeks beginning the last week of September on Sunday evenings.

The Coming Home Project is a member of the Dane County Time Bank. Therefore, rather than simply volunteering their time, everyone participating earns time dollars. It is hoped that the inmates participating will earn and spend time dollars to support and enhance their reentry into the community.

Richie Davidson has offered to lend some support to the project. Possibilities will be pursued as the project unfolds.

The Sangha voted to sanction the Coming Home Project as an official SnowFlower project with the Time Bank as a partner. This is done with the understanding that the project will not seek any financial support from SnowFlower Sangha or its members. This is being done to make sure that any potential financial resources are

not diverted from the Love and Understanding Project. All potential liability issues will also be covered by our partnership with the Dane County Time Bank.

### **Sharing the Merit**

David H. proposed that we encourage Tuesday and Friday leaders to close with Sharing the Merit. It can be done in any form the leader prefers, and is not mandatory. After a short discussion, the Sangha voted to approve.

### **Fall Retreat**

Walt talked about the Fall Retreat, which is scheduled to be held the weekend of October 9 –11 at Bethel Horizons. Celeste has agreed to be the registrar. Volunteers will be needed to help set up.

### **Discussion of the Revised Five Mindfulness Trainings**

There will be a discussion of the revised Five\_Mindfulness Trainings on August 12, from 7 – 8:30 PM in the library at Friend's Meetinghouse. The timing of this meeting will allow for the opportunity to take this feedback to the Estes Park Retreat.

Our meeting closed at 9:00PM, after a brief meditation.