

# MONASTIC ACADEMY

FOR THE PRESERVATION OF LIFE ON EARTH



THE CENTER FOR  
MINDFUL LEARNING



QUARTERLY REPORT, SUMMER

# 2017

## LETTER FROM SORYU FORALL



Dear supporters,

It's good to be on this journey with you. **Thank you, on behalf of the residents here and all those they impact, for your ongoing support.** You and I together are giving this group the opportunity to create a new culture, a culture that respects and protects all life on earth.

We are working hard. That's the most important thing for you to know. This group is working all day, every day, with a level of dedication that I haven't seen anywhere else. They are fixing lawn mowers, digging ditches, calling electricians, creating schedules, doing fundraising, and meditating, too. We are doing something rare, something that goes against the flow of our society, creating a community where social impact, spiritual practice, and financial success are woven into one life. The most important point here is that this is hard, really hard, so **we are working just as hard to overcome the challenges that confront us and to fulfill our mission.**

We experienced some significant blows over the past couple of months. Moving here has required a full-scale reorganization. This has been one of the most significant transitions in our organization's history, and we are still trying to adjust. The residents pushed for this move, and agreed to take responsibility for making it work, but they remain overwhelmed by the magnitude of this shift as it continues to force them to master skills they hadn't even dreamed of developing. This is exactly what they came for, exactly the training offered here; so while it is disorienting, it's also a remarkable opportunity.

We lost some people in the move. A good reason to come to a place like this is to rest and heal, but those who came for that purpose saw that we wouldn't be able to serve them anymore. We needed to create a team that could run a monastery well enough to pay back a million dollars, and that level of pressure isn't for everyone. Losing them was painful, painful for all of us. We tried to support them as they found new places to live and grow, but it still hurt, and it left us with about a third fewer people than we had hoped. Teamwork and planning are two skills that will help, but we need more people.

Two of our largest supporters, a couple whose initial donation made this monastery possible (Thank you!), have experienced some financial changes that forced them to cut back significantly. While they subsequently were able to increase their monthly donation again to about half of the original amount, we are still left with a major gap in our expected fundraising revenue. Adding to this pressure, the renovations (i.e. building a meditation space that fits the world-class buildings that are already on site), has turned out to be more expensive than planned. We continue to raise funds for this project, since our current meditation spaces aren't large enough to hold the number of people we need to make this location successful in the long term.

But we have made great progress, as well.

Potential residents and guests are knocking at the door. The applications for residency have increased fourfold, to about one application per day, since we moved here. One of the residents explained this increase with, "They are getting the message from the universe that we can finally take them." We have welcomed a new resident, Christopher Russell, who is doing excellent work.

We need to build meditation spaces, and we have planned out the process, have prepared the zoning application, have brought out several builders and taken bids, and have everything ready to go as soon as we have sufficient funding. **We rely on our supporters to make this possible.**



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We applied for and received a non-profit tax exemption for this property, which will save us about \$20,000/year. We have reached out to and made friends with our neighbors, settling into this new community. On August 13 are holding a celebration for them and everyone who has been part of this move. ***We hope you come!***

***Our Co-working program — described in the prospectus — is also growing and evolving.*** We are now referring to it as our “guest” program. There is more interest than we anticipated, and this is good news. We projected that would host one per month for our first year, but we have already hosted seven. Our advertising seems to be working, and word-of-mouth is even more effective: people who come here are deeply impacted and tell their friends and family about it. Furthermore, they tend to come back. A few of these initial participants have already returned for a second visit, and 29% percent of them have applied to the Monastic Academy for full time residency. This is a poignant testament to the work of our residents, and the initial success of our guest program in furthering our overall mission.

As always, there is learning in any program, and thus far we’ve gleaned that guest participants tend to stay for shorter periods than we expected, and are willing to pay somewhat less than we had hoped for before they have experienced the benefits of their stay. In response, we are shifting our strategy to a more traditional approach for monasteries; charging a low price for their stay, and encouraging them to become long-term donors. This negatively affects our near-term budget, but over the longer term, it increases our financial and social capital. Again, we depend on the help of our supporters to overcome this short-term gap in projected revenues, and we remain encouraged by the extremely positive feedback and growth of this unique program.

**As the residents take more responsibility and become more competent, I have begun to step out of the role of Director, and step further into the roles of (1) Chair of Board, overseeing the vision and the overall financial picture, and (2) Head Teacher, creating the teaching system that will enable us to expand and change the modern world.** Since founding this organization seven years ago, I have overseen average growth of 104% per year. Ironically, in order for this to continue, I need to step back, to be less involved in deciding if we should try to fix the lawn mower or call someone to do it or bring it into the shop or buy a new one, and more aware of a higher-level view. As Darrell Williams, one of our major supporters, has noted, the residents here should take over everything they can in order allow me to do what only I can do. Cameron Joyner stepped forward to take the role of Executive Director in January of 2018. Peter Williams has taken over financial management. Steven Dee has filled in some of our fundraising gap by contributing about \$5,000/month through his own efforts. And all the other residents have taken on the roles that best suit them to advance our progress.

**This training integrates Responsibility and Awakening. These are our two most important ideals, and dedication to realizing and demonstrating their deep meaning runs our lives. Responsibility is the ability to make good things happen. Awakening is happiness independent of whether good or bad things happen. This group is demonstrating this training by taking financial Responsibility for the organization so that the organization can support their spiritual Awakening.**

I will be away in August, September and October, traveling for fund raising and to do my own training, as I have tried to do each year. Please stay in touch with our residents and please support them. They are vulnerable now, both financially and emotionally. **They are worn, bare and exhausted. The fact is that they know, as we do, that this may not work. All of our efforts may not be enough. But every time you express your belief in them, it gives them strength and makes success more likely. They live not only on your financial contributions, but even more on your emotional contributions. Love them. They are creating a culture that is saving the world. We are giving them a chance to do what we cannot imagine.**

May all be free,

-Soryu Forall



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## MAPLE: MONASTIC ACADEMY FOR THE PRESERVATION OF LIFE ON EARTH

The move to our Lowell campus was time-consuming and arduous, against the backdrop of a cold, wet and windy spring. The residents that made it through this period are more resilient and committed than ever. Across the board, residents are stepping up to tackle the massive practical and financial obligations at hand, proving daily that this training really works. Whether these shifts happen fast enough to succeed at the task at hand remains to be seen.

### Progress:

- Residents became increasingly responsible for deciding how to run day-to-day operations and attack long term strategy
- We saw a strong uptick of applications online, with over 20 during the past month
- Christopher Russell joined (our first new resident at Lowell)
- We continued to run extracurriculars and professional trainings such as contact improv, public speaking workshops, listening and perspective taking exercises, and interpersonal meditation classes (circling)

### We hosted a diverse array of people and events including...

- A day long Shinzen Young retreat in May that filled the main hall with visitors
- A private training for the employees of Mansfield Hall (an education company)
- Internships with students from Emory and Brown
- Took the wonderful photos featured in this report







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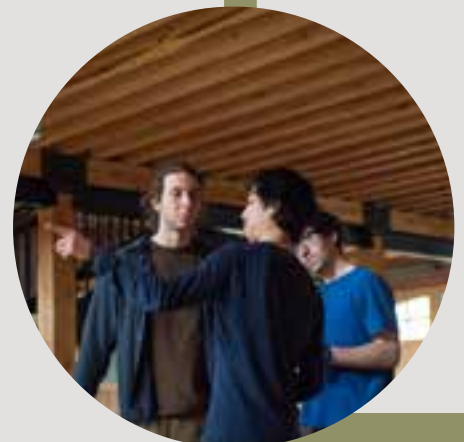
## MAPLE: MONASTIC ACADEMY FOR THE PRESERVATION OF LIFE ON EARTH (CONT)

### Challenges:

- Make sure that we don't lose sight of our formal meditation practice goals
- Continue to increase the number of resident applications
- Maintain momentum and high spirits despite the huge workload
- Build an increasingly effective and focused culture at the monastery

### Intentions:

- Explore online advertising and improve web presence including sharing more dharma talks and video content
- Further clarify and improve the intake process for new residents
- Continue to practice diligently, with more residents reaching significant awakening benchmarks
- Work with alumni to help with recruitment
- Use Soryu's upcoming period of intensive training to cultivate greater leadership from residents in all areas, as we have done in the past
- Host another day-long Shinzen young retreat this summer (July 22nd) and week-long one in the fall (September 22nd - 29th).



## LEADERSHIP EMERGES: PROFILE ON PETER “PAN” WILLIAMS



Pan, our senior resident, lives with integrity and compassion. He cares for others with humility and humor, and forgives without a thought. His kindness has made Soryu cry. He takes feedback with aplomb and adapts with enthusiasm, doing anything required to make the organization flourish.

Before he came here, he was already changing the world. Having received a degree in Political Science from St. Olaf College, he went on to get an MBA in Sustainable Business from Marylhurst University. He then spent over a decade as a professional Advocate and Community Organizer working on environmental issues, progressive politics, and human rights.

He demonstrated over the last few months that we can go from good to great. He has met increasingly difficult deadlines, come to excel in orientation to detail, and is managing our resources department, a job formerly done by three people. He recently revamped the process for handling donations and instituted a policy to insure that we receive proper tax exempt status, while continuing to manage the day to day finances.

### INTERVIEW WITH PAN:

*Why did you join the MAPLE Mindfulness and Leadership training residency?*

I knew I needed a place where I could deepen my mindfulness practice with a skilled teacher, a rigorous training schedule, and a community of practitioners dedicated to awakening. At the same time I wanted a 21st Century organization where I could put the skills I'd developed to use and make an impact on the world. I did an exhaustive search of different intentional communities and meditation centers and found that MAPLE had the highest standards of excellence in the integration of spiritual development and social change. I didn't know much about Vermont except for Ben and Jerry's and Bernie Sanders, but I got in my Honda Civic and went. I'm very grateful that I did!

*How have you benefited from your time at MAPLE?*

Training as a full time resident for two years has been immensely transformative. I've learned to set aside my own self-importance for the good of the group, to listen with openness, to burst through drowsiness to take action on what must be done. I've found peace in the eye of the storm that is our world, and as such I'm more able to be of benefit to others. The integration of Awakening and Responsibility has taught me to rise to meet unexpected challenges with interest and excitement. The benefits are too many to count, and I'm a better person because of this training.

*What has been your biggest challenge?*

The demanding schedule. Almost every hour of my day is spent working, exercising, eating, doing chores, or meditating. And although this immersive, rigorous training can be tough, it is a blessing that builds character and continually pushes me to grow.

*What are your goals/what are you looking forward to as you continue to train here?*

Being at the new property in Lowell is an incredible privilege. I look forward to serving the community through running the organization and continually throwing myself into the training in this beautiful paradise.



## GUESTS: PREVIOUSLY CO-WORKERS

We described this program in the original prospectus, and are now referring to this group as “guests,” a more general and easily understood term.

Once the dust settled from the move, we began to host guests, starting in early May. We found our price point was overly ambitious and that they tended to come for less time than we anticipated. We’re not sure yet if this is because our program is still young and improving, or if this will continue to be true into the future. Our plan is to make up for this shortfall by significantly increasing the traffic, by encouraging a donor relationship with guests after their stay, and by building a family of people who return many times.

### Progress:

- Significantly more guests than expected
- Three have already returned for a second visit
- 29% percent of our guests applied to the Monastic Academy for full time residency
- Word of mouth proves powerful as they have begun bringing their friends
- They are having transformative experiences here

### Challenges:

- Most guests come for a short time, about a week in length vis-a-vis the three weeks we predicted
- Netted only \$82.35 per guest per day, about a third of the anticipated \$238.10
- Total revenue for the first two months was \$4,200, just over half the anticipated \$8,333





## GUESTS: PREVIOUSLY CO-WORKERS (CONTINUED)

### Intentions:

- 🌱 Continue to provide a high-quality service that we're proud of and that receives positive feedback from guests
- 🌱 Increase traffic by improving our outreach and marketing and encouraging word of mouth
- 🌱 Focus on building long-term relationships with guests, thus pivoting towards using fundraising as a major part of our income generation
- 🌱 Offer solitary retreats as a way to increase the options for guests

### ANTICIPATED GUEST #'S (FROM THE PROSPECTUS):

YEAR #	1	2	3	4	5
NUMBER OF GUESTS	10	35	45	55	65
INCOME FROM GUEST	\$50,000	\$175,000	\$225,000	\$275,000	\$325,000

### ANTICIPATED MONTHLY #'S (BASED ON THE ABOVE CHART)

	NUMBER OF CO-WORKERS	TOTAL NUMBER OF DAYS GUEST WILL SPEND HERE	TOTAL REVENUE	REVENUE PER GUEST PER DAY
YEAR # 1 AVERAGE PER MONTH	.83	175	\$4,166.66	\$238.10

### ACTUAL GUEST #'S (FROM MAY AND JUNE):

MONTH	NUMBER OF GUESTS	TOTAL # OF DAYS GUESTS SPENT HERE	TOTAL REVENUE	REVENUE PER GUEST PER DAY
MAY	3	30	\$2,000	\$66.66
JUNE	4	21	\$2,200	\$104.76
MAY & JUNE	7	51	\$4,200	\$82.35





## GUEST PROFILE: ROSIE JAYE

Rosie Jaye just graduated from UPENN's Masters of Applied Positive Psychology. She came here to write her capstone project and reflect after an intense year of study. She enjoyed her first week so much that she came again three weeks later.

### Excerpts from her blog:

"I've spent the last week living and working on a Modern Monastery in Vermont and yesterday, I tasted sunshine for the first time..."

*"What I deeply respect about the Center for Mindful Learning is its ability to conform to the modern world without losing the intention of awakening and responsibility... As you sit in front of your computer screen or your cell phone, where is your mind? When you are eating breakfast where is your mind? What are you seeing, feeling, thinking inside and outside? Is there something beyond looking in and looking out? **How can you sense a place between and beyond inside and outside of the body if you cannot perceive it with the human senses?"***

"It is so fascinating to look closer at the daily, moment to moment experience of being human. And damn, am I realizing how numb I've been for so long."

*Read The Full Blog Post Here:  
<http://gorosebud.blogspot.com/2017/05/tasting-sunshine.html>*



## PROPERTY

The property is an excellent base. Orienting ourselves to use it best continues to be a process both of careful planning and learning by doing.

### Progress:

- Experimented with many different configurations to find the optimal use for the various rooms and buildings
- Created two zendos, a fitness room, and four offices
- Moved, unpacked, and sorted over a dozen U-Haul truck loads
- Cleaned years of rat droppings from the barns
- Set up an outdoor zendo on the porch for late night sitting
- Dug a quarter mile ditch by hand



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## PROPERTY (CONTINUED)



### Challenges:

- The property is vast and requires a tremendous amount of work to maintain
- Renovations are needed
- Meditation space is currently limited to 9 residents and 9 guests
- The walls are barren and in need of art. **In the main room we have a stunning scroll with calligraphy that depicts Bodhidharma (the monk who brought Zen Buddhism from India to China). The scroll was a gift to us and carries a remarkable and touching history of its own. Not only does this scroll bring a grandeur and gravity to the room, but it reminds us of the circle of generosity that sustains our lives. This is the sort of meaningful art that we hope to surround ourselves with.**

### Intentions:

- Keep the monastery clean and well maintained
- Continue to determine the best use for the various spaces
- Undertake crucial building projects (see below)



## BUILDING PROJECTS

With these projects, we aim to increase the scope and effectiveness of our operations.

**Renovations:** Since moving into and using the space we've become aware that we need to...

- Enlarge the kitchen
- Replace the garage doors into the main room that lose heat and are unattractive
- Create a room for personal, one-on-one meditation instruction.
- Estimated cost = \$15,000.



## BUILDING PROJECTS: (CONTINUED)

**Trail system:** We are in the midst of planning, scouting, and building a world class trail system that will allow access to the nearby peaks of Mount Hadley and Mount Norris, connect us directly to one of the most extensive trail systems in the state, providing running, skiing, biking, snowshoeing and walking trails for endless exploration.

● Estimated cost = \$20,000

**Meditation Spaces:** As mentioned in our first quarterly report, we are raising funds to complete a soaring meditation space that will vastly increase our capacity to host both residents and guests. After discussions with different contractors we've determined that the total cost is somewhat higher than originally anticipated. **We will wait until next year to build these spaces unless we receive a large donation by the end of July.** Each space is connected to the others in a single complex, but if we don't have sufficient funds, we can start with two of them and add the third when resources allow.

*Projected Costs (including excavation, construction, tools, labour and materials)*

● Large Hall (capacity 33) = \$132,072

● Medium Zendo (capacity 18) = \$106,653

● Teaching Space = \$86,127

● Total estimated cost = \$324,852



## JOIN US

You are always welcome to visit for a day, a week, a month, or longer.

**Our new address is:**

**751 Page Rd**

**Lowell, VT 05847**

If you'd like to come, or to be in touch for any reason, please email at [info@monastic.academy](mailto:info@monastic.academy) or call at 802-540-0820.

On Sunday, August 13th, from 12 noon - 5 pm, we will celebrate the establishment of our new location here in Lowell, and we invite you to join us! Please let us know if you can attend.

Thanks again for your support. Together we are building a whole new culture.

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