



## A LIFE OF GRATITUDE AND SERVICE

by John M. Travis

*“The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.”*

– Mahatma Gandhi

I spent my early years bumming around Asia striving for enlightenment in ashrams, holy sites, monasteries, dozens of meditation retreats, visiting and getting teachings from some of the greatest teachers of the 20th century. Unfortunately, all this did was have the power to untangle much of my early life’s damages, but it was mostly about “Me.”

Returning to the U.S., I had the unique experience of marrying and having two wonderful children, learning much of what I had missed as a child. I relied on my abilities as a skilled carpenter to get by and eventually learned the disheartening truth of divorce.

Having spent so many years being served by wise and compassionate teachers, I was fortunate enough to be encouraged (by Jack Kornfield and Joseph Goldstein) to teach and share my years of experience. At first, it was a daunting experience. I was fearful of public speaking and felt I had nothing to give. I struggled for many years with financial woes, carrying the lofty ideals of living on the generosity of the community (dana). Actually it didn’t work so well until the latter 1990s. The great thing about living in Nevada City was that it forced me to create a teaching circle going from Auburn, Chico, Reno, Carson City, Sacramento, and Davis, just to get by. That circle eventually birthed Mountain Stream.

I began to feel the power of helping others. It was suddenly such a great gift to be able to offer myself without the constraints of the fee-for-service economy. And the wonderful gift of how giving

MAR 2016 – AUG 2016

*This edition of Dharma Stream is devoted to the theme of “Service.”*

to others truly diminished my own fearful self-importance.

I am wishing that each of you find this same sense of service in your hearts, as all of you have gifts to offer to bring greater happiness into your life and those of others.



*“Thousands of candles can be lighted from a single candle, and the life of the candle will not be shortened. Happiness never decreases by being shared.”*

– The Buddha

# DAYLONGS AND RESIDENTIAL RETREATS

*March 2016 through December 2016*

For the most up-to-date information, visit [www.mtstream.org](http://www.mtstream.org)

## **MARCH 12, SATURDAY**

Mary Helen Fein and Maeve Hassett  
Mercy Center, Auburn, CA

**INFO:** [maryhelen@mtstream.org](mailto:maryhelen@mtstream.org)

## **APRIL 30, SATURDAY**

Bhante Rahula (Monastic)  
Nevada City Insight Center

**INFO:** [zara@mtstream.org](mailto:zara@mtstream.org)

## **MAY 2, MONDAY**

Meal offering to Bhante Rahula  
Evening Dharma Talk  
Nevada City Insight Center

**INFO:** [Jen@mtstream.org](mailto:Jen@mtstream.org)

## **MAY 3, TUESDAY**

Meal offering to Bhante Rahula  
Afternoon Dharma Dialog  
Nevada City Insight Center

**INFO:** [Jen@mtstream.org](mailto:Jen@mtstream.org)

## **MAY 15, SUNDAY**

Heather Sundberg  
Sierra Insight Sangha, Placerville

**INFO:** [meburgess.lotus@gmail.com](mailto:meburgess.lotus@gmail.com)

## **MAY 22, SUNDAY**

John Travis  
Nevada City Insight Center

**INFO:** [Larry@mtstream.org](mailto:Larry@mtstream.org)

## **JUNE 5 – 12, SUNDAY – SUNDAY**

Heather Sundberg  
Sierra Friends (near Nevada City)

**INFO:** [Jenna@mtstream.org](mailto:Jenna@mtstream.org)

## **JUNE 18, SATURDAY**

Heather Sundberg  
Nevada City Insight Center

**INFO:** [Barbara@mtstream.org](mailto:Barbara@mtstream.org)

## **JUNE 25, SATURDAY**

Heather Sundberg  
*Five Things Which Wake Us Up!*  
Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of  
Northern Nevada  
Reno, NV

**INFO:** [www.dharmazephyr.org](http://www.dharmazephyr.org)

## **JUNE 26, SUNDAY**

Heather Sundberg  
*Integrating Insights into Our Daily  
Lives*

Ascent Physical Therapy  
Carson City, NV

**INFO:** [susanj@dharmazephyr.org](mailto:susanj@dharmazephyr.org)

## **JULY 24, SUNDAY**

Ayya Anandabodhi (Monastic)  
Nevada City Insight Center

**INFO:** [www.mtstream.org](http://www.mtstream.org)

## **AUGUST 14 – 19, SUNDAY – FRIDAY**

John Travis  
*Happiness Born of Freedom*  
Camp Galilee, Glenbrook, NV

**INFO:** [www.dharmazephyr.org](http://www.dharmazephyr.org)

## **AUGUST 21, SUNDAY**

John Travis  
Nevada City Insight Center

**INFO:** [www.mtstream.org](http://www.mtstream.org)

## **SEPTEMBER 30 – OCTOBER 9, FRIDAY – SUNDAY**

John Travis  
Teton Sangha, Jackson, WY

**INFO:** [Tetonsangha.com](http://Tetonsangha.com)

## **OCTOBER 2, SUNDAY**

Heather Sundberg  
Nevada City Insight Center

**INFO:** [www.mtstream.org](http://www.mtstream.org)

## **NOVEMBER 4 – 13, FRIDAY – SUNDAY**

John Travis and Heather Sundberg  
Angela Center, Santa Rosa

**INFO:** [Carol@mtstream.org](mailto:Carol@mtstream.org)

## **NOVEMBER 12, SATURDAY**

Dennis Warren  
Nevada City Insight Center

**INFO:** [SusanS@mtstream.org](mailto:SusanS@mtstream.org)

## **DECEMBER 3, SATURDAY**

John Travis  
Nevada City Insight Center

**INFO:** [www.mtstream.org](http://www.mtstream.org)



*Dharma talks by John Travis and  
Heather Sundberg can be found at  
[www.mtstream.org](http://www.mtstream.org) and  
[www.dharmaseed.org](http://www.dharmaseed.org)*

## WHAT'S HAPPENING AT THE CENTER

*Ongoing sessions at 710 Zion Street, Nevada City*

### MONDAY NIGHT SITTING GROUP

7:00pm to 8:30pm  
Silent meditation and dharma talk.

### OPEN TEMPLE FRIDAYS

10:00am to 2:00pm  
Enjoy: walking the labyrinth,  
spiritual library, 20 minute group  
sit from 11:30am to 11:50am

### 1ST WEDNESDAY VIDEO NIGHT

6:30pm to 8:30pm  
Watch and discuss a movie together.

### OTHER WEDNESDAYS

*Kalyana Mitta Group*  
(Spiritual Friends)  
6:30pm to 7:45pm  
A peer-led, interactive Dharma  
community gathering.

### INSIGHT MEDITATION CLASSES

April 14 – May 12, Thursdays  
7:00pm to 8:30pm  
Led by Bruce Pardoe  
Sliding scale: \$35 to \$50  
Info: [Maryhelen@mtstream.org](mailto:Maryhelen@mtstream.org)

### MOUNTAIN STREAM BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETINGS

5:00pm to 7:00pm  
April 17, May 15, June 12, July 24  
(Board retreat)

## SIT WITH OUR EXTENDED SANGHA

*Connect with community in your local area*

### AUBURN

*Canyon Spirit Yoga Center*  
Mary Helen 530-887-9400  
[maryhelen@mtstream.org](mailto:maryhelen@mtstream.org)

### CARSON CITY, NV

*Dharma Zephyr Sangha*  
[www.dharmazephyr.org](http://www.dharmazephyr.org)

### CHICO

*Heart of the Lotus Sangha*  
[www.skycreekdharmacenter.org](http://www.skycreekdharmacenter.org)

*Chico Insight Sangha*

[Chico.insight@gmail.com](mailto:Chico.insight@gmail.com)

### DAVIS

*Davis Insight Group*  
[www.davisinsightgroup.org](http://www.davisinsightgroup.org)

### DIAMOND SPRINGS

*Metta Meditation Group*  
Will Lister 530-306-7264  
[mettaphoto@mac.com](mailto:mettaphoto@mac.com)

### MINDEN/GARDNERVILLE, NV

*O2 Yoga and Wellness*  
Karen 775-267-2424

### NORTH SAN JUAN RIDGE

*Your Place Too*  
Bruce 530-277-3470  
[bruce\\_pardoe@yahoo.com](mailto:bruce_pardoe@yahoo.com)

### PLACERVILLE

*Sierra Insight Sangha*  
[sue@boegerwinery.com](mailto:sue@boegerwinery.com)

### RENO, NV

*Dharma Zephyr Sangha*  
[www.dharmazephyr.org](http://www.dharmazephyr.org)

*One River Sangha*

(LGBT and Allies)  
[www.oneriversangha.org](http://www.oneriversangha.org)

### ROCKLIN/ROSEVILLE

Donna 916-532-6955  
Elke 916-632-8766  
[donna@mtstream.org](mailto:donna@mtstream.org)  
[elke@mtstream.org](mailto:elke@mtstream.org)

### SACRAMENTO

*Sacramento Buddhist Meditation Group*  
[www.sbmgroup.org](http://www.sbmgroup.org)

*Sacramento Insight Meditation*  
[www.sactoinsight.org](http://www.sactoinsight.org)

## ADD YOUR VOICE

The online *Dharma Stream* newsletter is published twice a year by a volunteer staff. Your contributions are warmly welcomed. For consideration, please submit articles, poems, photos, and artwork by:

- Aug 1, 2016 for Fall edition
- Feb 1, 2017 for Spring edition

Articles should be no more than 400 words, and may be edited by the newsletter team.

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## THE REAL DIRT ON MOUNTAIN STREAM

by Marcia Craighead

I walked into the Nevada City Insight Center at 710 Zion Street in Nevada City two and a half years ago and it became my new home. After living in Wyoming for 40+ years, I moved to California to deepen my meditation practice through exploring wise livelihood and to generate a bit of self compassion for this aging body by living in a warmer and gentler climate. A new adventure began, at age 60, as Mountain Stream's first Executive Director.

There is so much I could say about how life is different for me now. But instead of detailing the steep learning curve of running a community meditation center, I would rather share what happens once a month at our Insight Center, affectionately known as the "Village Temple." We decided to name this particular day Temple Care. A swarm of people give up

their Saturday morning and pour their sweat equity into wise action by cleaning the Temple/Center, top to bottom, inside and out. These folks get downright dirty and for a couple hours we kick it, making the inside shine and the outside flourish. The property needs ongoing attention with its beautiful gardens and an amazing labyrinth gracing the back yard.

The inside of the Temple, if you haven't seen it, is magnificent. A lovely environment that's inviting and peaceful, except when it's Temple Care Day. On those Saturdays, it's a bustle of activity with people mindfully cleaning, polishing, and washing windows. Loving attention is placed on dusting the Tibetan paintings (thangkas) and wiping clean the two stately statues of Buddha and Tara that adorn the meditation hall. The deities and devas who grace us with their presence, combined with practitioners who come and meditate, create an atmosphere of calm abiding that evokes being still and mindful. During our cleaning spree, every so often, a yogi reminds us to be mindful by striking a singing bowl, inviting a pause in activity so we

*A swarm of people give up their Saturday mornings and pour their sweat equity into wise action by cleaning the Temple/Center, top to bottom, inside and out.*

notice if the mind is embodied in the present moment or off on a tangent about this or that.

For me, this day of enthusiastic spirit signifies the heart and generosity of meditation practice. With a common intention of benefiting all beings and a motivation for being of service for the greater collective, we engage with one another by mindfully and wholeheartedly attending to the Village Temple: the sacred space where Sangha finds refuge, Dharma, and teachings of the Buddha. ❁

# BLESSINGS AND BLESSINGS

by Steve Solinsky

As a photographer, visiting such places as Cambodia, the United Kingdom, Mexico, or Cuba have been journeys of the soul. They're much more than just a chance to steal a picture or two with my lens. It's my fascination with colorful forms in these unfamiliar, strange landscapes that speak to something deep inside, hanging in the balance between yearning and purpose.

At Angkor Wat, I wandered into the bowels of an ancient, crumbling shrine, deep in the Cambodian jungle. The elder guardian of this place, a Yoda-like luminous crone, greeted me, extending immense love and joy in her smile. I offered her a small donation, at which point she blessed me in the form of a humble length of crimson plastic that she carefully wrapped around my wrist. She held my hands in hers for a long moment, beaming into my eyes.

I had been blessed.

Later, a bit stunned, I hobbled on through the ruins with my camera and back to my waiting friends, not quite the same person who had arrived.

Was she an apparition, conjured by this haunting ruin lost in the encroaching green?

"No, I saw her here before, years ago. She serves and carries the



*Photo credit: Steve Solinsky*

spirit of this place," my companion says.

She offered me her being, and I accepted.

Feeling a warmth in my chest, and having been blessed, I can bless.





## ZENBARISTA

by Corey Hitchcock

Coffee, the secret plasma of a weeklong meditation retreat? Who knew? Beneath the insightful dharma talks, deep meditations, and creative vegetarian menus, an odorous river of dark, very strong coffee ebbed and flowed. And let no one say, “There’s no coffee!” at 5am before the first sit. Entirely unacceptable, middle way or no.

My vow of service for this week: “I vow to never allow the coffee to run out.”

“Don’t even think it,” someone murmured, without a trace of humor.

Neglecting those damp grounds, possible grounds for shunning? A not so sacred spring, and me the keeper. The coffee-making machine at the rear of the lunchroom began to feel like an energetic deity, spewing peat-colored liquid 18 hours of every day. Zen koans and the art of keeping coffee flowing merged. As coffee’s faithful liaison, I filled and dumped the pungent, frothy, filtered grounds. “Busy minds busier?” I wondered, not a coffee drinker myself.

The atmosphere thickened. Extension cords blew and power sources flipped in lunchroom and Zendo. Meanwhile transfusions for transformative practice were continually dispensed in silence to suffering and blissful meditators alike. Guaranteed, I decided, to either

clear the busy mind, or throw it into blissful clarifying hyper-drive. Tendrils of delicious woody scent followed me everywhere.

In predawn darkness, my mysterious dispensers steamed as I checked their caffeinated levels before running in to sit with my companions.

“Which one is freshest?” a retreatant whispered earnestly. “All pretty fresh,” I replied, replenishing as fast as humanly possible. One of the Roshis, without hesitation, stuck his cup directly beneath the dark stream between filter and pot. “I worked in a lot of restaurants,” he said, and smiled knowingly. ☸

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## SERVICE AT HOME

by Tim Brady

When the call went out to write on service, I didn’t think I had much to say.

Oh, I cooked for Hospitality House over the years, and when I was younger, I was everywhere: Kiwanis, Pal’s, Friendship Club, CAST, Team3, and I coached soccer in two leagues. But something hit me when I was on my third shift cooking French fries at the county fair one year, when my six-year-old daughter came by and asked if I was going to have any time to go on some rides. I didn’t! That was one of the worst feelings I’ve ever had. Yes, we were raising money for kids, but my kid didn’t have her dad at the fair that year, and I didn’t have her. That’s when I started serving at home.

I didn’t know to think of it as service. At first I felt selfish, and then I just didn’t care. But I kept finding places in my family where I was needed. An alcoholic brother-in-law, a grandson experimenting

with drugs, a nephew who would not get out of bed for high school. Turns out it was racial slurs (he is half Mexican) that were keeping him from going to school.

I have a big family. Everywhere I turned, someone needed help, and I could do something about it.

No one gave me accolades, medals, pins, a picture in the paper. But for me, the real service is right here with my family, friends, and neighbors.

Gandhi says to be the change you want to see. If everyone did this, where would the problems be? If everyone served at home with a family member or relative, how much better would it all be?

If we all look to our service at home first, before, or while we reach beyond, wouldn’t it lighten the burden? We’ll get little recognition and surely no awards, but remember we’re in true service. Perhaps the original service. ☸



## MANY WISE OPPORTUNITIES

SEVA, SERVICE, VOLUNTEERING

by Jennifer Scott, Mt. Stream Volunteer Coordinator

“Is it just dusting and sweeping?” a voice on the phone asks me.

I pause. Is it just that?! How to describe a Saturday morning of Temple Care here at Mountain Stream?

I breathe.

“There is dusting, and meeting others, and sweeping, and spontaneous bell ringing, and that cool feeling of working within a team...” I offer.

“Oh...,” the same voice perks up, surprised, “I’ll try it.”

My job as Volunteer Coordinator is simply and graciously (I hope) to identify, describe, invite, and connect us Sangha members with That Which Needs Doing.

In any given week, Mountain Stream may have as many as five different events and programs: Monday night sit, Wednesday night Kalyana Mitta, Friday Open Temple, Saturday Temple Care, Daylong, Family Practice Program, or Committed Students Program. All of these require service support:

greeters, hosts, cleaners, dusters, registrars, managers...attending to the needs of the teachers, our Center and, of course, participants.

As Buddhists, isn’t our practice to bring mindfulness into our lives, both on the cushion and off? To my way of thinking, this means

*“Strictly speaking, there are no enlightened people, there is only enlightened activity.”  
– Suzuki Roshi*

bringing mindfulness even to That Which Needs Doing! Oh my! How is that for deepening one’s practice?! Challenging one’s equanimity?!

That Which Needs Doing.

Whether it is paying bills, washing dishes, waiting on line or online, surmounting an exasperating phone call, negotiating traffic, or dusting statues at our Temple, staying present and aware of reactions—cultivating and re-cultivating mindfulness—is a wise choice. It stretches us in good ways.

Jack Kornfield recalls Suzuki Roshi said, “Strictly speaking, there are no enlightened people, there is only enlightened activity.”\*

I find Suzuki Roshi’s words unexpected, simple, and liberating. With “enlightened activity” as a lightly-held mantra, I invite you to cultivate your curiosity about what needs doing here at Mountain Stream. Try something once. The experience may surprise you. You may surprise yourself.

To peruse “Five Easy Ways to Get Involved,” please visit the Volunteer Opportunities page of our website located under Ways To Give.

In closing, let me share this: The initially reluctant Temple Cleaner is now a regular at the monthly Temple Care Saturday and reports that her own house cleaning now involves a bell-ringing meditation!

How and where will service stretch you?

Deep bow. ☸

\* *After the Ecstasy, the Laundry*  
by Jack Kornfield

## HOMELESS AND HUNGRY!

by Margo Cooper and Betsy Abrams

*“One thing I know:  
The only ones among  
you who are really  
happy are those who  
have sought and found  
how to serve.”*

*– Albert Schweitzer*

Winter rain and freezing cold here in the Sierra foothills are seriously dangerous for the homeless and hungry, which averages a few hundred people in the Grass Valley, Nevada City area.

Young and old, weak and strong, they struggle with the misfortunes of being stranded without food, housing, warm clothing, friends, medicine, and help.

One organization reaching out to help is called Hospitality House, inspired by the late, beloved Utah Phillips and initially formed by Utah's wife, Joanna Robinson. In the beginning, volunteers gathered from the local faith communities to provide food and shelter at local churches, as well as counseling, clothing donations, and medical services.

Mountain Stream joined the effort, cooking and serving dinners for

30 to 65 people and sometimes offering music and short massage sessions. For eight and a half years, our team served once a month at Peace Lutheran Church in Grass Valley and occasionally at other churches.

Now Hospitality House has a building, Utah's Place, which can house up to 70 men, women, and children. For the past three years, Mountain Stream, led by Betsy Abrams, has faithfully continued to cook and serve one meal a month for about 80 people. This is truly a way to serve and to offer our generosity to those less fortunate. Funds for planning, procuring food, cooking, and serving all take time, thought, and energy. Give it! It's fun to work together with your friends. You won't be sorry.

Also, maybe primarily, we find Hospitality House a place to offer our listening ear, our love and caring. Often before a meal, there's an opportunity to offer simple beneficial practices with a few minutes of silence: a prayer, words of gratitude, and sometimes a short guided Metta practice. I've noticed how the guests respond gladly and are appreciative. Our hearts are warmed. We are here together.

People are reaching out to help. Divine Spark, Sierra Roots,

Salvation Army, the Food Bank, and the Food Ministry provide food, clothing, tents, and other necessities – and there are plans for future shelters. There are many ways to get involved to alleviate the suffering of the unfortunate in our communities. ❁



*Drawing by Susan Solinsky*





## CARING FOR THE EARTH

by Kathy Schwerin

When I first started my Buddhist study and practice, a friend asked me, “Why do you follow a path where the first thing the guy taught is that ‘life is suffering?’” I replied, “Because

it’s an accurate description from my experience, and he didn’t stop there. He described a logical, doable method for being deeply happy even with the truth of how very challenging life can be.”

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## SERVICE IS JOY

by Eric Moses

Some years ago, after decades of alcohol and drug addiction, I started the process of recovering. I was guided through the 12 Steps process by a very kind, compassionate man who made it clear to me that “recovery” was not about helping myself, but about learning how to be helpful to others.

I was taught that service to others is foundational to my own recovery. I didn’t quite understand at the time why this was so. On top of that, I didn’t feel as though I really had anything of worth to offer someone else because of my long-held feelings of worthlessness. But it was required of me as part of the process of the 12 Steps, so I did it because I wanted to survive.

I would do service by volunteering at the homeless shelter, the jail, and recovery homes. As I did this, something started happening in me. I began to realize that I could empathize with others’ difficulties and suffering and that I actually wanted to help. My concerns were

no longer primarily for my own well being, but were shifting to the well being of others. I also began to see that I do have something of value to offer to others: kindness.

Several years later, I began to study the teachings of the Buddha and found that the first thing the Buddha would teach a student was the spiritual practice of Dana, or of generously giving of oneself for the benefit of others. I find it fascinating that in both 12 Step Recovery and Buddhadharma, the beginnings of effecting a perceptual change within ourselves is the practice of looking for ways we can benefit the lives of those around us.

This practice continues to transform my view of what it means to be alive and has imbued in me a sense of meaning and purpose that was previously non-existent.

As Kahlil Gibran so aptly put it, “I slept and I dreamed that life is all joy. I woke and saw that life is all service. I served and I saw that Service Is Joy.” ❁

It’s difficult to face suffering. We want to turn away, and there are so many ways to do it. But when we do, we miss much of what is true in our lives. As a therapist, sitting with the personal suffering of clients, I found they often felt tremendous relief in facing and accepting their suffering; from that acceptance, energy could then come to take action.

When I think about the suffering of our beautiful planet, I immediately feel contractions of fear, grief, anger, helplessness... Ah, helplessness. That’s the cue reminding me to step outside my limited self and connect with others—reading, talking, perhaps coming together in action.

A classic prescription from the Buddha (sometimes called the world’s first psychologist) is to explore, understand, and overcome difficult mind states through “noble friends and noble conversation.” The diversity of the group I’m connecting with is extraordinary, from climatologists and other scientists to Catholic Bishops and evangelicals to insurance companies and politicians—people who are raising their voices, asking us to look at what’s happening.

Climate change is what I’m talking about. I find myself convinced that it is real, that human activity is driving it, and that there is actually relief and joy that arises when I join my voice with others’ voices to say that we can and need to do something about it, rather than shutting down and hoping it’s not true. ❁



# OH, TO RETURN TO DHARAMSALA, HOME OF THE DALAI LAMA

CHAMPIONING HEARING AMPLIFICATION FOR THE TIBETAN ELDERLY

*by Cindy Shaw*

For two months in 2014, I lived in Dharmasala during monsoon season, then fortunately I returned in October 2015 with California weather every day.

Arriving there felt like returning home. The charming room I rented had a balcony overlooking the Dalai Lama's residence, with birds soaring over the Himalayas in the morning and the monks chanting ethereally at night. I had met Tibetans and others living in the McLeod Ganj in 2014 so meal invitations abounded, especially Tibetan Momos.

Meeting my Tibetan daughter, Choyang, after seven years of sending photos and letters through a nun sponsorship was amazing. We could spend Sundays together and I marveled as she led her nunnery, Janchub Choling, into debate in front of the Dalai Lama during the annual Tibetan Buddhist Nuns Debate.

My five weeks there involved studying at a dharma center across from the main temple with an English translator and teaching

English. Plus, I completed a hearing amplification project for the Tibetan elderly home in McLeod Ganj.

As a speech pathologist, I wanted to bring hearing amplification to the Tibetan refugee community. Previously, I had offered a device to a learned nun and a doctor at the elderly home's medical clinic. This year, with the help of two nurses at the elderly home, I brought seven amplifiers for their personal use.

The people in this home have no family or means of support and are funded by the Tibetan Government in Exile. The elderly Tibetans receiving these amplifiers were ecstatic with appreciation. A 92-year-old lama hustled to make me tea while another clutched her hearing device, bowing, hands folded with thanks. "I am 92 years old and have not been able to hear for years. Now you have given me the gift of hearing. Now I can listen to the teachings of the Buddha, I can hear the voice of the Dalai Lama. I will pray you live to 97," the translator related.

My chest swelled feeling their joy and relief from the isolation

of deafness. This built my determination to continue a hearing amplification effort.

Doors started opening and I had a private audience with the Abbot of Namgyal (Dalai Lama's monastery) and the Secretary of the University, Institute for Buddhist Dialect (IBD), to discuss this fledgling project.

An email home yielded 24 donated amplifiers for next year. Yes, I hope to return next year when the first graduating class of Tibetan nuns to ever receive a PhD (Geshe) degree will be in McLeod Ganj. Choyang will return with her nunnery from southern India for the annual nuns debate, plus I can take daily classes from Rinpoche and, hopefully, expand this project.

I now wish to find audiologists to donate actual hearing aids to the project. Previously, it took several people three years to obtain hearing aids for a Tibetan nun studying for her Geshe degree. Eyeglass and vision services are provided to refugees, but providing hearing services has been largely overlooked. ❁

# MEDITATION AND THE PLACER HIGH GIRLS JV BASKETBALL TEAM

by *Mary Helen Fein*

I enjoyed meeting Malcolm Means, the forward-thinking coach of the Placer High School Junior Varsity Girls Basketball Team. This team of about ten girls plays a dynamic and winning game of basketball! Coach Malcolm's online research turned up my name and Maeve Hassett's from Mountain Stream Meditation. He invited us to the high school and to teach mindfulness meditation to the team.

To prepare, I dug out books by Chicago Bulls coach Phil Jackson, who used mindfulness and meditation techniques to take his team to six NBA championships. Maeve brushed up on mindfulness and meditation approaches for teenagers so the class could be adjusted to the specific age group—shorter sitting times, more guiding, and don't skip the raisins!

At the very first meeting, it was obvious the girls were interested. Several had family members who meditate, and all seemed open to the idea that it would be useful to them personally and as a team. When they discussed their basketball games, they talked about being of one mind together and seemed to understand how the key to playing well was more than just physical skill, that there was a spiritual aspect of connectedness which really made them play great games.

Over the course of three sessions, they seemed to enjoy meditating. They discovered what it was like to watch an itch instead of scratch it. They quickly understood the value of a little pillow, especially under the ankles. Some saw pretty colors, some reported peaceful experiences that were a comfort in their busy world of homework and games.

Coach Malcolm's original idea was that meditating together would help the girls stay more in the zone together during games. When Maeve and I recently attended a game against a local high school and a traditional archrival, it was obvious that the Placer girls were a

skilled team, plus well-coached and prepared. They seemed to have special energy and awareness as they dashed from one end of the court to the other. We saw how they threw themselves into seemingly impenetrable defenses and emerged with the ball in the basket. The final score told the story: we won 42 to 17!

Maeve and I had a great evening at the gym and are now big fans. We hope that our teachings will help the team as it moves through the season. A special visit to the locker room afterwards allowed congratulations for everyone and snapping the accompanying picture. ❄



*Photo credit: Mary Helen Fein*

# BLINK

by Susan Solinsky

Sometimes, timing is everything, just as they say.  
And intention. But inner gears  
grind out questions and start a ruckus –  
questions like: what is enough help, or too little?  
Who does this really serve?  
Is merely noticing enough, simply waiting?

Then comes silence and a moment of pure instinct rises  
like breath. There's no noise, just a quick step  
to the water faucet to cup my hands, collect some wetness,  
a moving prayer inside a seamless motion,  
seen by my grandchild and my own heart.  
Water trickles off these long fingertips onto a dried-out,  
flattened frog smashed beneath the heavy barbeque cover.  
The dark cloth weighs and traps it like steel.  
“Oh,” I say, “it's too late. He's probably a goner.”

Yet reassurances pour from my lips  
as I watch a primal kind of grace drip onto the goner.  
Today's fresh Sierra Nevada water, slightly cool in August,  
trickles life into that squished frog.  
Drop by drop. New murmurs bubble and spill from me,  
cascade into quick exclamations and gasps.

The frog fills like a sponge, puffs, resurrects into another body,  
reorganizes into tree frog,  
into legs, belly, head and eyes, blinking back.  
His heart beats. Drip. Gasp. Pulse.  
He rises, green, slippery and wet and leaps away,  
like nothing happened. Pure instinct, I guess.  
My fingers throb, my breath catches,  
eyes blink and blink. ❁



*Drawing by Susan Solinsky*



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**MOUNTAIN STREAM MEDITATION** offers the heart and depth of the Buddha's teaching for all beings, to ease suffering and to awaken to compassion and joy. We are an Insight Meditation community, serving as a resource for Buddhism in the Sierra Foothills of Northern California.

**NEVADA CITY INSIGHT CENTER**, located at 710 Zion St., is part of the Insight Meditation community from coast to coast. We welcome you to explore spiritual practice in a peaceful environment that supports various kinds of mindful practice. This is a place to connect, reflect, and study.

**FOUNDER AND GUIDING TEACHER** John Travis is dedicated to teaching the Dharma so it remains accessible to all. He began teaching in 1986 after studying in Asia with teachers in both the Theravada and Tibetan traditions. John is a senior teacher at Spirit Rock Meditation Center, has a private practice as a meditation counselor, and was trained in Hakomi body-centered psychotherapy.

**RESIDENT TEACHER** Heather Sundberg began teaching in 1999 after completing a four-year teacher training at Spirit Rock Meditation Center under the guidance of Jack Kornfield and Joseph Goldstein. Heather teaches at the Nevada City Insight Center and nationally in association with several other meditation centers.

**GENEROSITY** is foundational to meditation practice and sustaining the Buddhadharma. Together we invest in future generations by sharing the gift of a generous heart. Buddhist teachings are offered freely and are available to all levels of practitioners. Opportunities to contribute include financial gifts, service, time, and energy.

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