

Kevala Retreat Newsletter 2018

End of year greetings to all as we send warm wishes for safety and wellbeing. Thank you for once again offering your support and encouragement for the flourishing of Kevala Retreat. Another cycle of impermanence, arisings and vanishings have moved through the valley, and it's time to send you the yearly update.

This year Liberation Park became Kevala Retreat, a name change some time in the making & reflecting the maturation of aspirations set forth more than a decade ago. The word Kevala (*Kay-vah-lah*) with its intimations of wholeness and fruition held a great deal of meaning for Ajahn Buddhadasa and has become dear to us in turn. May we continue to nourish aspirations that are worthy of the name.

Practice Happenings



A growing cadre of retreatants has graced the valley this year. We are grateful for their spiritual labor and for the sense of dedication and good will they bring to the spaces. We are continually struck by the palpable sense of serenity that grows in practice spaces, even as we recognize the struggle & effort that must at times be summoned to do the important inner work. It is a testament to the transformative power of aspiration and awareness as a holding container for the often arduous work of awakening.

The first on site two-week Anapanasati retreat took place in August. Thanks go to Ellen McCammon, Scott Chambers & Carolyn Barko for their organizing and food preparation efforts. The chance to do intensive, small group retreat with Santi in attendance was appreciated by all. With the success of this initial trial we look forward to offering more opportunities for small group structured practice with guidance from Santikaro or facilitation by Jo Marie. Stay tuned for 2019 planned offerings which in addition to specifically Buddhist themes may include topic weekends such as aging, death & dying, women and food, and a Cacao/plant medicine retreat among others.

The Kevala herd of horses traveled to Southern Wisconsin in May to participate in a work shop for meditators with an interest in horses. Horses and humans had a day of interactions focused on what horses have to teach humans about the path of awakening. It was a joy for all, including the herd, who much enjoyed their time with the group. We hope in the future to provide such offerings on site.

The Jung/Depth Psychology study group wrapped up a year of reading and discussion of Helen Luke's 'Old Age.' The deep and thoughtful conversations enjoyed during the year inspired us to continue on with Helen Luke's 'Dark Wood to White Rose,' an examination of Dante's Divine Comedy as allegory for the human journey of individuation and awakening. All with an interest are welcome to join the group at any time.



Projects & Valley Care

In May the new 12 kW solar array was inaugurated. So far we are on course to produce as much energy on site as we consume during the year. We are elated to have this accomplished!



Volunteers were generous with their time and labor, enabling us to make more progress on cleaning up downed trees, and removing overgrown apple trees. Eric Lindo & Brian Walachy of Chicagoland, and Peter Kaufman of Madison installed pavers on the lower exterior of the guest house to replace the gravel bed that has been in place since construction. Timely help was provided after the August deluges took out a great

deal of fencing. Before September was out the fences were standing again. A crew of volunteers was amassed to perform the first prairie burn on the south facing hillside, but alas, the weather did not cooperate as winter moved in swiftly this fall. We will regroup in the spring!

Future Aspirations

With the building of the main Guest House Kevala has reached a new stage in its ability to shelter sincere practitioners during their spiritual deepening towards awakening. With a year and a half of inhabiting the new building we can more clearly see the remaining needs for the Kevala valley to reach a more complete version of itself. Progress will depend on funds and the involvement of dedicated Kevala stewards. The wish list includes:

- ❖ a meditation hall with a bathroom and two additional sleeping spaces
- ❖ two additional remote hermitages for those wishing more rustic & solitary retreats
- ❖ completed pathways, railings, walking, sitting and altar spaces on the grounds
- ❖ a comprehensive plan and a volunteer team to manage invasives species and the restoration of prairie plants and healthy woodlands

The order of priority is still in the making. The first two items are more finance dependent, the last two items more labor dependent. We eagerly welcome the involvement of all who have an interest in seeing peaceful refuges such as Kevala flourish in our difficult times.

Near Term Need

Before moving on to fund additional building in the valley, we feel it is most prudent to work toward retiring the existing debt. The remaining mortgage for the property currently lies at just over \$94,000. If you are inspired to help fund a debt-free Kevala we would heartily welcome donations or fund raising efforts. Please consider this effort in your year-end giving.

Blessings

A Metta/Blessing board hangs on a wall in the Guest House. In these times when alienation and fear appear with some regularity, asking to be met with wise response, these lines by John O'Donohue in his Blessing for Belonging have graced the board. They feel appropriate for the closing of our current cycle around the sun, and our opening to the new:

- ❖ May there be kindness in your gaze when you look within
- ❖ May you never place walls between the light and yourself
- ❖ May you allow the wild beauty of the invisible world to gather you, mind you, and embrace you in belonging.

You are welcome at Kevala Retreat for your earnest inner work, and your quiet reflection toward your path of awakening. Please come see us soon.

With Metta,
Santikaro & Jo Marie

