

Annual Report 2007

(with retrospective since 2005)

Vermont Insight Meditation Center
First Board of Directors' Annual Report

Compiled by: Jack Millett, President Board of Directors; Cheryl Wilfong, Treasurer
Claire Stanley, Guiding Teacher

This first Annual Report of Vermont Insight Meditation Center covers all of the activities of our organization from its inception up to September 18, 2008, the date of our first Annual Meeting. The financial report attached to this annual report covers January to December 2007.

Development of Vermont Insight

Overview

Offering instruction in Insight Meditation (Vipassana) and the study of Buddhist teachings in the Theravada tradition is the core of our mission at Vermont Insight Meditation Center. Since our opening in 2005, we have fulfilled this mission and brought the teachings into the midst of Sangha members' daily lives through our activities. Equally important, the Board of Directors is pleased to report that our Center is now a well-established organization in the community, known to many, respected by those who do know us, and now with ongoing relationships with other religious and spiritual groups, as well as therapeutic groups in the Brattleboro community. Many people come to us through referrals from our friends in these other groups, as well as through our website, distribution of flyers and brochures, and newspaper coverage.

Brief History of the Development of VIMC

Vermont Insight Meditation Center opened its doors in September, 2005. We began by offering an open meditation sitting on Thursday mornings led by Drew Kovach and Tuesday evenings led by Cheryl and Claire, the regular Sunday sitting on the first and third Sundays, and two evening courses. At that time, three to five people attended morning or evening meditations, 10 – 15 people attended Sunday sittings, and 23 people attended courses. Our original email list to the Sangha contained 42 names. The Tuesday evening sitting was discontinued after 2 months of low attendance. In 2007, we began to offer a Tuesday morning sitting led by Rose O'Connor as well as the Thursday morning sit with Drew.

We have grown steadily since 2005. There are now 179 people on our email list, course registrations are averaging 35 people per term, morning meditation sessions average six people, and Sunday gatherings draw between 15 and 30 people. When these retreats are taught by local teachers, we average 15 people and when senior dharma teachers come from IMS, we average 45 people.

Meditation Practice and Teaching at VIMC

Consistent with our mission, Vermont Insight has been offering teachings from the Theravada Buddhist tradition through Sunday sittings, ongoing early morning meditations twice a week, weekly courses for three terms a year, ongoing evening sittings and discussions in the summer, and monthly daylong retreats. We have invited lay and monastic teachers from the area and from Insight Meditation Society with great success.

Teachings offered at all of these events have spanned the breadth and depth of the Buddha's teachings. Sunday sittings and discussions have looked at The Five Spiritual Faculties, Not-Self, Kindness and Forgiveness, Compassion, Equanimity, and Happiness to name a few. Ongoing courses have examined in depth the Four Noble Truths, the Eightfold Path, and the Four Foundations of Mindfulness as well as the Paramis, Death Contemplation, and comprehensive Introduction to Meditation courses. Summer evening meditations and conversations have taken up topics such as Concentration, Happiness, Calm Abiding, Peace, and Not-Self. Finally, our daylong meditation retreats have focuses on essential aspects of the teachings on Mindfulness, the Seven Factors of Awakening, Intention, Concentration, and applications of mindfulness in areas such as Gardening.

In 2007, the Board of Directors agreed to sponsor a half-day meditation retreat for its members and for those who are practice leaders for the Tuesday and Thursday morning sittings. In this way, the group of directors who guide the activity of VIMC, along with those who teach regularly at VIMC have joined in deepening their meditation practice in the context of our group.

Retreat Assistance Fund

An anonymous donor established a Retreat Assistance Fund (RAF) in fall of 2007 at the time when we submitted our final 501c3 documents to the IRS. When the IRS approval of our status was conveyed to us, we were thereby able to establish the fund and begin its activity. In 2007, two people attended retreats at IMS as a result of this fund.

It has become apparent that those who attend retreats at IMS return to VIMC with a deeper connection to the meditation practice as well as a stronger commitment to their connection with VIMC. Many volunteer to work on committees after attending retreats. Additionally, teachers from VIMC, when visiting IMS, have been quite pleased to see Sangha members in the meditation hall!

Other Significant Activities at Vermont Insight since 2005

Sangha Pot Luck Suppers

Vermont Insight has sponsored Pot Luck suppers for the Sangha since January 2006. These Pot Lucks allow us to meet informally, share food and good conversations, and build our sense of community in ordinary ways. The Board is committed to continuing the Sangha Pot Lucks for the future.

Fund Raiser for New Cushions

Vermont Insight launched its first successful fund raiser in 2007 where we raised a little under \$1,350 which allowed us to purchase 15 sets of zabutons, zafus, and support cushions for our Center. Special thanks to Cheryl Wilfong and Rose O'Connor for organizing the fundraiser, to Drew Kovach for researching the various companies that make meditation cushions, and to Drew and Paul Rodrigue who drove up to Barnet, Vermont to pick up and deliver the cushions for our first of the year Sunday sitting in January 2008.

Sustainability of Vermont Insight Meditation Center

Development of Committees

From 2005 to midyear of 2006, Jack Millett and Claire Stanley performed almost all of the administrative tasks associated with the establishment and development of VIMC. In the early days of VIMC, several committees were formed. First, the Board established the Finance Committee and the Program Planning Committee. On the Finance Committee, Cheryl Wilfong and Rose O'Connor took on the financial viability of the organization, as well as a commitment to any fundraising. The main teachers at VIMC, Jack Millett, Cheryl Wilfong and Claire Stanley comprise the Program Planning Committee, establishing the program for the year with teachers invited from the area and from IMS for daylongs, with the coverage of the Sunday sitting meditations by them or other teachers, and with the establishment of courses throughout the three terms of the year. These committees complemented the activity of Jack and Claire in the organization and development of the Center.

In mid year 2006, we established a Sunday and Daylong Support Committee headed by Anne Fines in order to set up the meditation hall and whatever other necessary items for the smooth functioning of our regular Sunday sitting meditation and of the daylong retreats. These three committees focused on most of the externalized tasks of the Center and provided much needed support.

Statistical Overview of Vermont Insight Activity for FY07

15 people took our introductory course, Insight Meditation

7 classes were offered to 55 students

7 daylong retreats had a total attendance of 135.

Teachers included Amita Schmidt, Chas DiCapua, Mu Soeng, Kate Wylie, Jack & Claire, Cheryl

50 people attended the daylong retreat led by Michelle McDonald in September

1 special event: James Baraz gave an evening talk

Tuesday morning and Thursday morning meditation sittings attended by 2-6 people

Summer Tuesday evening sits had an average attendance of 10

3 Potlucks

Anne Fines chairs the Set-Up committee of 5 volunteers

Sunday Dharma talks—attendance increased from 12 at the beginning of the year to 24 in December.

Retreat Assistance Fund offers scholarships for VIMC members to go on retreat

1 person applied and was given a \$210 scholarship to Insight Meditation Society.

Bought a bell and 20 folding chairs.

Raised \$1,350 toward new cushions (bought in January 2008)

Financial Report FY07

INCOME

Dana from sitting groups	\$2,465
Donations	\$150
<i>Total Donations</i>	<i>\$2,615</i>
Course Registrations	\$3,225
Day-long Retreat Registrations	\$2,020
<i>Total Registrations</i>	<i>\$5,245</i>
Interest Earned	\$8
TOTAL INCOME	\$7,868

EXPENSES

Speaker Stipend	\$50
Support for Guiding Teacher	\$1,000
Office Supplies and Telephone	\$770
Rent for Neighbors' Hall	\$3,242
Miscellaneous	\$129
501c3 expenses	\$935
Folding chairs and bell	\$333
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$6,459
NET INCOME	\$1,409

The total amount of the net income was placed in a VIMC reserve fund for the accomplishment of a future vision of a home for VIMC.

Respectfully Submitted to the Board of Directors and to the Sangha

Jack Millett, President
Cheryl Wilfong, Treasurer
Claire Stanley, Guiding Teacher