

# Annual Report 2009

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

## *Dharma at Vermont Insight: Deepening Practice, Understanding and Commitment*

Similar to last year's report, in 2009, Vermont Insight continued to strengthen and grow the roots of teaching and learning the Dharma in the midst of community and in the midst of our daily lives. In the Sunday sittings, weekly sitting groups, courses and daylong retreats, an overall sense of depth of practice can be felt. Visiting teachers commented on the maturity of our sangha. Meditation periods are now marked with deeper stillness. Questions asked during sessions reflect engagement and deeper understanding.

Most significant in 2009, however, is the overall commitment to Vermont Insight as a community of practitioners. Sangha members volunteered for more VIMC events and responsibilities, and many volunteered for community service. A spirit of dana in the form of service now characterizes our sangha.

From the standpoint of dharma study, the courses offered in our fourth year of operation now reflect more serious topics. Students enrolled in courses that included topics from the third and fourth foundations of mindfulness, including working with emotions, investigating the nature of self, and the seven factors of awakening. Other courses included investigation of mental habits, the cultivation of concentration and the awakening of joy. We were again able to offer a course on mindfulness and depression as well as a new course on calming the anxious mind.

By end of year 2009, our email listserv numbers was close to 300 (an addition of 100 people), indicating steady growth of interest and connection with VIMC. As was the case last year, Sunday group sittings were attended by an average of 20 people with some Sundays reaching over 30, depending on weather conditions and season. Course attendance averaged out to nine members per course over the year out of an offering of 12 courses. Tuesday and Thursday morning sittings continued with a solid core group. Efforts were made to increase participation with some amount of success.

As was possible in 2008, Vermont Insight offered a meditation retreat or special dharma presentation every month of the year except for December in 2009. The teachers of these retreats were: Claire Stanley and Eowyn Allstrom, Cheryl Wilfong, Jack Millett and Claire Stanley, Chas DiCapua, Kate Wylie, Amita Schmidt, Leigh Brasington, Myoshin Kelley, and Mu Soeng. Total attendance at all the daylong retreats reached 188, down from 216 in 2008, but up from 135 in 2007. Leading teachers from IMS or BCBS attracted the largest groups. Having Amita Schmidt, Leigh Brasington, Myoshin Kelley and Mu Soeng teach at VIMC this year was quite wonderful.

The summer Tuesday evening sittings were successful again this year with attendance ranging from 6-20 participants. Practice leaders included Rose O'Connor and Mary Mathias with the addition this year of Fiona Cook and Rick Willhite.

Additionally, two monastics taught Sunday sittings in 2009. The Venerable Daw Viranani taught the first Sunday in October and the Venerable Tsewang Lama taught the first Sunday in November. Both Sundays brought higher numbers of attendance with Tsewang Lama's visit bringing close to 50 people on a Sunday.

A new offering in the fall was the establishment of a Dharma Friends or Kalyana Mitta Group, meeting on Wednesday evenings. Dharma Friends is a peer-led group with an emphasis on daily life practice focused on study of a particular book, chosen by the group. The VIMC Dharma Friends group has attracted people from various Buddhist traditions. Cheryl Wilfong initiated this group and guided it through the fall, up to November when she left for a month-long retreat. The group now has a small but steady attendance of four.

## **Sangha Activities**

We had two VIMC potluck dinners this year. One hosted by Diane Bander in June at her beautiful home in Brookline with 18 in attendance. The second pot luck took place in October at Melissa Hays' lovely home in West Brattleboro and was attended by 7 people.

The VIMC sangha contributed \$263 dollars to the Drop-In Center and worked preparing and serving meals at the Overflow Shelter. Through the winter and spring of 2009, Kim Lier coordinated all of the meals. As of October 2009, Cheryl Baxley and Fiona Cook took over this task and will continue until April 2010. Six members of the sangha volunteered for the 6-hour shifts (7pm-1am and 1am-7am) between late November and early April.

## **Participation of Sangha Member on Committees**

As mentioned above, sangha participation in the overall running of VIMC continues to grow. We now have the following committees in place:

1. The Sangha Development Committee with Mary Mathias, Cheryl Wilfong and Chris Arieta. Cheryl Wilfong oversees this committee. This group organized the two Pot Luck dinners and is excited about developing a VIMC presence on the Internet and is working on creating a "cybersangha."
2. The Set-Up Committee with Anne Fines, Mary Mathias and other volunteers. Claire Stanley oversees this committee.
3. The Finance Committee with Cheryl Wilfong and Rose O'Connor. The finance committee sent out two appeals this year: one for the "Teacher Retreat Fund" and our "Annual Appeal."
4. The Publicity Committee with Fiona Cook, Susan Dennison, and Kevin O'Connor. Jack Millett continued to oversee this committee in 2009. This committee has established VIMC on iBrattleboro.com.

5. Administrative Support Committee with Rose O’Conner and Suzann Jones. Claire Stanley oversees this committee. Rose and Suzann now answer the phone, respond to inquiry emails, establish registrations for every course and daylong retreat, and help out with documents for evening courses.
6. The Retreat Assistance Fund Committee with Paul Rodrigue, Drew Kovach and Megan Littlehales. Drew Kovach oversees this committee. Two people took advantage of the fund in 2009. Money for the retreat offered to Jack Millett as retiring Board Member was also taken out of this fund.

The Board would like to thank the above committee members and all other volunteer helpers for their contributions and dedication to keeping VIMC running smoothly.

### **VIMC Board of Directors’ Activity**

The Board bid farewell to Jack Millet this year as he stepped out of the position of first Board President. Jack’s vision, gentle persistent style, and dedication to the practice have been a major influence on the development and growth of VIMC. Jack will continue his classes, dharma talks, and various other dharma activities.

The Board was fortunate to have Drew Kovach step into the Board President position.

The Board welcomed two new members: Fiona Cook and Paul Rodrigue. The Board has finally reached its targeted number of seven members.

It was decided by unanimous decision that retiring Board members who have served three years or more will be offered a week-long retreat at IMS, BCBS, or the Forest Refuge in recognition of their services.

The Board met with Amita Schmidt on July 25 to work on its own internal processes and vision. The Board found Amita’s input invaluable since she travels around the country visiting other dharma centers. She has agreed to return for another meeting with the Board in July 2010.

An Executive Committee was constituted from the Officers of the Board and the Guiding Teacher – i.e., President, Treasurer, and Secretary. The Executive Committee will meet before monthly Board meetings to set and clarify meeting agenda.

Board members participated in two 3-hour meditation retreats at Solar Hill.

Board member term expirations were reviewed and are as follows:

Cheryl	September 2010
Drew	September 2011
Mary	September 2011
Anne	September 2012
Fiona	September 2012
Paul	September 2012

Cheryl Wilfong retired as bookkeeper, and Lawrence Williams volunteered his bookkeeping services for 2010.

## **Vermont Insight Financial Report 2009**

### **INCOME**

Dana from Sitting Groups \$3,533  
Donations \$285  
Course Registrations \$4,760  
Day-long Retreat Registrations \$2,820  
Annual Appeal \$2,255  
Interest \$7  
**TOTAL INCOME \$13,660**

### **EXPENSES**

Guiding Teacher Education \$1,200  
Speaker Stipends \$200  
Office Expense \$1,610  
Rent \$4,445  
Liability Insurance \$463  
Travel (for visiting teachers) \$120  
**TOTAL EXPENSES \$8,038**

**NET INCOME 2009 \$5,622**

Respectfully Submitted by the Board of Directors to the Sangha.