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# Mid America Dharma News



## *Equanimity: Our Greatest Friend* by Shaila Catherine

I'd like to begin with an early Buddhist poem from the Therigatha:

*If your mind becomes firm like a rock  
and no longer shakes  
In a world where everything is shaking  
Your mind will be your greatest friend*

To have a mind that is our greatest friend – that's something that most of us want. The mind that doesn't shake is a description of the mind that is equanimous.

### *Stay connected and loving with things as they are*

Equanimity describes a complete openness to experience, without being lost in reactions of love and hate. It's a powerful quality in its own right, and it fortifies other qualities. It supports wisdom because when the mind doesn't shake, we can stay with the truth of things long enough to have a deep insight. *(Continued on page 2)*

## Annual Mid America Dharma Open Meeting

Have you ever wondered what it takes to run a non-profit? Are you interested in how Mid America Dharma does its business, sets up retreats, and brings the Dharma to the midwest? Please join us for the annual open board meeting: Saturday, January 22, 2011 at 10:00 am in Show Me Dharma's center at 2611 Chapel Drive, Columbia, MO.

## Join Us on Facebook!

Mid America Dharma has a Facebook page! In an effort to reach more of our Sangha, Mid America Dharma will now be posting retreats and events on Facebook. The page also has a discussion board for issues such as ride sharing and community events. If you have a Facebook account simply type "Mid America Dharma" in your search bar and become a fan of our page. We welcome your comments and questions - feel free to drop us a message now and then!

## Equanimity: Our Greatest Friend

*Continued from page 1*

Equanimity has a balance that empowers loving-kindness (*metta*) with patience, so that we care, even in times when the people that we love do self-destructive things. Without equanimity we might demand that happiness occur in the ways that we think it should, rather than stay connected and loving with things as they are. Equanimity endows compassion with courage, so that we have the courage to face the pain in life and to face the cruelty in the world. When we care deeply, we try to help, but we can't always alleviate pain. Sometimes what we do doesn't actually help.

### *You can't control what another person will do*

At the time of the Buddha a very wealthy merchant named Anathapindika was a great supporter of the Buddha. He was renowned for his generosity, and not just to the Buddhist monks and other recluses. He provided the initial capital for many of his relatives to start businesses.

But Anathapindika had a spendthrift relative who squandered the gifts and investments, and repeatedly asked for more. Each time Anathapindika tried to help, but finally he said "No more. That's it!" The relative continued his spendthrift habits, fell into debt, and in not too long a time, died; his body was discarded in the rubbish heap.

When Anathapindika heard about this, he felt terrible. In grief, he spoke with the Buddha, asking "Should I have given him more money?" The Buddha's response was that there was nothing more that Anathapindika could do. He did what he could with a pure intention, but he could not control how another person used those resources. We need equanimity when we've done what we can, and there's nothing more we can do, and we have to experience the results. Equanimity describes a state of balance. Even when things don't turn out the way we want them to, equanimity imbues the mind with a calm radiance.

Some people say, "I don't want equanimity" because they think it means indifference, or

coldness, or hesitation, or withdrawal. But these are forms of aversion. With equanimity, we accept the world as it is, and connect anyway. An equanimous mind accepts the fact of pain in the world. It understands suffering and cruelty as part of this world that is dominated by ignorance; it engages and responds anyway.

....

### *Pleasure and Pain*

Did anybody have both pleasure and pain today? There's always some fluctuation between pleasure and pain. Even if your whole body aches and you're in agony, there's still a moment of pleasure when you smell the toast at breakfast; or when you step outside and the warmth of the sun just catches the cheek. We need equanimity to remain balanced and present in the flow, between pleasure and pain. In the Middle Length Discourses (M. 38) the Buddha said:

*On seeing a form with the eye, one does not lust after it if it is pleasing and one does not dislike it if it is displeasing. . . . Having thus abandoned favoring and opposing, whatever feeling one feels, whether painful or pleasant, or neither painful nor pleasant, one does not seek gratification through feeling or remain attached to it. As one does not do so, craving for feeling ceases. With the cessation of craving comes cessation of clinging; with the cessation of clinging, cessation of being; with the cessation of being, cessation of birth; with the cessation of birth, aging and death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair cease. Such is the cessation of this whole mass of suffering.*

You might see some garbage, and there's a reaction against it, see a beautiful flower and there's a movement toward it. Abide with mindfulness, comprehending things as they actually are. Abandoning both the movements of favoring and opposing, one still feels whatever one feels, whether painful or pleasant. He's not talking about the cessation of feeling here. He's not talking about being numb, or dulled. Rather, whatever one feels, one feels it without craving.

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*Adapted from a Dharma talk given to Southern Insight Meditation retreat, at Staveley, New Zealand, October 2006.*  
<http://www.imsb.org/teachings/equanimity.php>

*Shaila Catherine will be leading a MAD residential retreat in Leavenworth, KS (Kansas City area), April 1-3.*

## Mid America Dharma Retreats

### Ginny Morgan



Ginny Morgan lives in Columbia, Missouri. She is a guiding teacher for Show Me Dharma Center (Columbia, MO) and a former President of the Board of Mid America Dharma. After working as a play therapist for acutely and chronically ill children for many years, she has shifted her focus to Dharma teaching, and to working exclusively for Dharma activities. She studied with Ram Dass, Munindra-ji, Matthew Flickstein and teachers from Insight Meditation Society and Spirit Rock Meditation Center.

December 30, 2010 – January 2, 2011 (*residential New Year's retreat*)  
LaSalle Retreat and Conference Center - Wildwood, MO  
Cost: \$270 - \$400 registration for this retreat is open until December 16

### Robert Brumet



Robert Brumet leads the Unity Village Insight Meditation Group near Lee's Summit, MO. He has received Community Dharma Leader certification from Spirit Rock Meditation Center in Woodacre, California, and is an ordained Unity minister and a faculty member at Unity Institute.

January 28 – 30, 2011 (*non-residential*)  
Sanctuary of Hope - Kansas City, KS  
Cost: \$60- \$90 registration for this retreat is open until January 14

### Bridget Rolens & Jon Yaffe



Bridget Rolens has practiced Insight Meditation since 1997. Recognized by the Spirit Rock Teachers Council as a *Community Dharma Leader*, she co-leads the St. Louis Insight Meditation Group. As Vice-president of MAD, she has been instrumental in bringing nationally- known teachers to the Midwest and has managed numerous retreats. In 2007 she completed Matthew Flickstein's "Teaching as a Form of Practice." She is also program facilitator for Masterpeace Studios' Mind-Body Stress Reduction (MBSR) program in Crestwood, MO.



Jon Yaffe has practiced Insight Meditation since 1999 and has been a co-leader of the St. Louis Insight Meditation Group since 2006. A student of Matthew Flickstein, he has completed two of his programs: *Teaching as a Form of Practice* and *The Two Year Training*. He has served on the Board of Directors of MAD since 2005, currently serving as President as well as Registration Coordinator.

March 4 – 6, 2011 (*non-residential*)  
St. Louis, MO  
Cost: \$60 - \$90 registration opens December 4

### Shaila Catherine



Shaila Catherine has been practicing meditation since 1980 and has taught since 1996 in the USA, India, Israel, England, and New Zealand. Shaila has dedicated several years to studying with masters in India, Nepal and Thailand, completed a one-year intensive meditation retreat with the focus on concentration and jhana, and authored *Focused and Fearless: A Meditator's Guide to States of Deep Joy, Calm, and Clarity*. She also has extensive experience with the practice of metta. Shaila Catherine is the founder of Insight Meditation South Bay, The Buddhist Meditation Center of Silicon Valley.

April 1 - 3, 2011 (*residential*)  
Kansas City/Leavenworth, KS  
Cost: \$350 - \$525 registration opens January 1





## Community Dharma Leaders in Mid America

In addition to offering retreats in the Midwest each year, Mid America Dharma is committed to supporting local sanghas. One way in which MAD does this is by offering financial aid to local group leaders who have been accepted into Spirit Rock's Community Dharma Leader Program. Spirit Rock, located in Woodacre, California, is the major retreat center for Insight Meditation on the west coast.

According to Philip Jones, Mid America Dharma retreat leader, board member, and treasurer, and a graduate of the first Community Dharma Leader program, "James Baraz, one of the founding teachers of Spirit Rock, and other Spirit Rock teachers, had come to understand that there was a need for a continuity of Dharma instruction and leadership throughout the country that couldn't be provided by retreat teachers who might only visit for a few days each year."

As a result, continues Phil, "the Community Dharma Leader (CDL) program began through James's vision and effort and has continued through the vision and efforts of James as well as Tara Brach, Eugene Cash, Gina Sharpe, Thanissara and Larry Yang. This vision, as expressed on Spirit Rock's web site, was based on the understanding that "Leaders who are ethical, who understand the principles of dharma practice and who can elicit clarity, kindness and patience within their community are urgently needed as the Dharma begins to sink deeper into the Western experience and as opportunities increasingly arise for creating access to practice in diverse communities."

Phil, along with two other teachers on MAD's current retreat schedule – Ginny Morgan of Columbia and Robert Brumet of Kansas City, received support from MAD to participate in the first CDL group. Since then, MAD has provided aid to Elizabeth Fryer (St. Louis), Joe McCormack (Columbia), Bridget Rolens (St. Louis), and Lynn

Rossy (Columbia). Three additional teachers are now being supported in the fourth Community Dharma Leaders program: Phebe Duff (Little Rock), Maureen Hall (Rolla), Tonda March (Columbia).

About the CDL experience, MAD vice-president Bridget Rolens, who completed the program in 2009 and will be co-leading a MAD retreat in March, comments, "The CDL program gave me access to a wonderful variety of teachers and their understanding of the dharma. Our teachers covered a wide range of topics from sutta studies to engaged Buddhism, from insight meditation to compassion practice." She also praises the practical experience offered by the program: "I received valuable opportunities to practice giving dharma talks and guiding meditations, with feedback from fellow leaders."

Having supported these teachers, MAD now benefits from their teaching. Please see p. 3 for more information on the upcoming retreats led by CDL graduates Ginny Morgan (New Year's), Robert Brumet (Jan.), Bridget Rolens (with Jon Yaffe, March), and Philip Jones (Sept.). We think you'll agree that these have been wonderful investments in the future of the dhamma.

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## New Sliding Scale Encourages Generosity

Mid America Dharma recently created a new payment system for retreats. The new system now has a sliding scale that allows Sangha members in need to benefit from the generosity of their fellow retreatants. Those Sangha members who have more may choose to give additional funds above the base registration fee. These additional contributions serve two purposes; first they are used for scholarship funds for retreatants in need and second they help Mid America Dharma to defray the cost of the retreat so that we can maintain affordable registration fees.

For two thousand years teachings, teachers and Sangha have been sustained through Dana (Generosity). It is inspiring to see that tradition continue to support a diverse and rich Buddhist community in the heartland.

*If the code after your name ends in "00," you will be dropped from the mailing list after this issue. If you want to stay on the mailing list, please contact Marnie Hammer, 455 E 80th Ter, KC, MO 64131 before April. Or notify her by email [marniehammer@att.net](mailto:marniehammer@att.net) to add your name to the email newsletter list. Please indicate MAD Newsletter in the subject line of the email.*

# Mid America Dharma Upcoming Retreats

December 30, 2010-January 2, 2011 .....	Ginny Morgan, Residential, St. Louis, MO
January 28-30, 2011 .....	Robert Brumet, Non-residential, Kansas City, MO
March 4-6, 2011 .....	Bridget Rolens & Jon Yaffe, Non-residential, St. Louis, MO
April 1-3, 2011 .....	Shaila Catherine, Residential, Leavenworth, KS
June 25 -26, 2011 .....	Sharon Salzberg, Non-residential, Kansas City, KS
July 8 -11, 2011 .....	Gloria Taraniya Ambrosia, Residential, St. Louis, MO
September 9-11, 2011 .....	Philip Jones, Non-residential, St. Louis, MO
October 13-16, 2011 .....	Mary Grace Orr, Residential, Kansas City/Excelsior Springs, MO

*For the latest information on retreats and a full listing of Midwestern Buddhist groups please visit our website:*

**[www.midamericadharm.org](http://www.midamericadharm.org)**

## Mid America Dharma

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