



Mid America Dharma News

Winter Issue

Mid America Dharma
<http://www.midamericadharm.org/>

November 1999

2000 Retreat Schedule

- Dec30-Jan2:* New Years Residential with Santikaro Bhikku
Conception, MO
- Jan 28-30:* Non-residential with Rodney Smith
Kansas City, MO
- Mar 3-12:* Old Yogi Residential with Matthew Flickstein
Excelsior Springs, MO
- Mar31-Apr2:* Non-Residential with Gil Fronsda
St. Louis, MO
- May26-Jun4:* Residential with Eugene Cash, Joseph Goldstein,
Myoshin Kelley and Sharda Rogell.
Conception, MO
- Aug 11-13:* Residential with Bhante Gunaratana
Conception, MO
- Sept 13-17:* Residential with Wes Nisker & Ginny Morgan
Location to be arranged.
- Nov 9-13:* Residential with Mary Orr
Conception, MO

Contact Information:

For registration information on the upcoming 2000 retreats, see registration info on page 3 and 4 or at <http://midamericadharm.org/retreats.html>.

Mid America Dharma Offers New Year's Retreat

This New Year, Mid America Dharma has a treat in store for you. For the first time we will offer a New Year's Retreat. New Year's Retreats have become customary at many practice centers and are a delightful alternative to the traditional New Year's Eve parties embraced by our culture.

This retreat promises to ring in the New Year in a deep and significant way. More than just a listing of resolutions, this event will create a sacred space in which to enter the new millennium. The retreat, which runs from December 30th through January 2nd will be led by Ajahn Santikaro Bhikkhu, a western monk living in Thailand who was ordained in 1985. He will provide instruction in the anapanasati (mindfulness with breathing) methods of vipassana (insight) meditation.

Venerable Santikaro is the senior monk at Suan Atammayatra and the main English translator for his teacher, Ajahn Buddhadasa. Among his familiar work is his translation of Buddhadasa Bhikkhu's book published by Wisdom in 1997, *Mindfulness With Breathing*. He also served as editor for Buddhadasa's work, *Heartwood of the Bodhi Tree* (Wisdom Publications, 1994). Ajahn Santikaro hopes to return to the West to teach at some point in the next few years and plans to reside somewhere in the Midwest. We are pleased that he will be joining us for this very special retreat.

Annual Public Board Meeting

The Annual Public Mid America Dharma Board meeting will be held on Saturday, January 8, 2000, starting at 10 am, in the Waldo Library, 215 E. 75th Street, Kansas City, MO. Pre-registration is important. Please contact either John Flaherty or Marnie Hammer at (816) 523-5061. This is your opportunity to let us know how we can serve you better and also for you to hear the Mid America Dharma plans for the future.

Retreat Center Planned

The last few issues of the Mid America Dharma Newsletter have carried articles in which a dream has been forming – the dream of a Midwest retreat center of our own. In 1998, we began a Retreat Center Development Fund. 1999 saw that fund slowly begin to grow. In 2000 we need to make a commitment to the support of that dream in whatever way we are able. Some of us are blessed with more than enough money to see our way through this world. Some of us have talents and abilities that we can share. Some of us can only spare a few dollars a month and yet want to be part of the effort to create a place where people can go to meditate. Whatever you can do is perfect. Whatever you can do, your part, becomes part of a larger whole that will eventually bring this dream to life. But we can't be passive. Action and intention is the key. Now in these last few months before the turn of the new millennium let's take action in this regard. Each gift that we make toward this effort brings us one step closer to our dream. It does not matter if the effort is small. Bit by bit we move closer to creating a space where people in the Midwest can come to experience Freedom. So even if we can only give a dollar we are buying into a priceless opportunity for all of us – a quiet, simple, and beautiful place in which we can come together to practice. All we have to do is trust, practice generosity in whatever form we are able, and let our love shine through our actions. That's more than enough.

Yes, I want to help build a dream. Please accept my donation of:

\$1000 \$500 \$100 \$50 \$25

\$15 OTHER

I can't give financially right now but want to help.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Home Phone _____ E-mail _____

Send To: Mid America Dharma
200 E. Parkway
Columbia, MO 65203

*Mid America Dharma Group is a tax-deductible 501(c)3 organization.

Weekend Retreat With Rodney Smith

Mid America Dharma will be hosting a weekend retreat with Rodney Smith in Kansas City on Jan 28-30. Rodney is the founder of Seattle Insight Meditation Society and a senior teacher at Insight Meditation Society in Barre MA. Over the last 15 years Rodney has devoted much of his energy to serving as a caregiver to people who are dying. His recent book *Lessons from the Dying* (Wisdom Publication) explores the connection between life and death and chronicles many of these experiences through the voices and stories of the dying. With Rodney's deep compassion, we are encouraged to accept the inevitability of our own death and hence reevaluate the direction and purpose of our present life. Rodney spent eight years in Buddhist monastic settings, both at the Insight Meditation Society in Massachusetts and several years in Asia. He ordained with Mahasi Sayadaw in Burma and practiced three years with Ajahn Buddhadasa in Thailand. When he returned to the West he started working in hospice care and teaching Insight Meditation throughout the U.S. Rodney continues to work part-time in hospice care and is guiding teacher for Seattle Insight Meditation Society and Insight Meditation Houston.

Rodney will be signing his book on Thursday January 27 and giving a public talk on Friday January 28 both from 7-9 pm at Unity Temple on the Plaza 707 West 47th Street Kansas City, MO 64112. Phone (816) 523-5061 for more information.

Finding Dharma in Prison

It would be hard to find a place where suffering is more apparent than in a maximum security prison with a death row. Potosi Correctional Center in Missouri, where only eight percent of the inmates are likely to be paroled, is just such a place. Eight hundred men like Joe, whose guarded expression crumbled into tenderness as he watched a demonstration of a bow with joined palms. And Cody, who, after practicing formal walking meditation for the first time, asked shyly, "I was on lock down for three years and I did a lot of walking back and forth, and I got into another zone, kind of alert and calm. Was that walking meditation?" And Dan, who said, "Some guy in the courtyard shoved me, and usually I would have punched him, but I watched my anger rising instead."

I was given a chance to lead an Insight Meditation group at the Potosi prison and I jumped at it, but with misgivings. It wasn't that I was afraid of the inmates. I knew they were just like myself, with strengths and weaknesses, subject to the laws of conditioning. They were simply experiencing consequences, drastic ones, as a result of their choices. I was unsure, however, whether I could handle the grim prison environment. I was especially uncertain whether I could convey the Dharma in a way that would reach them. After all, by most of the criteria that society holds important, we had little in common. How could we relate?

I understood that, for this to work, I merely had to do what I was being asked to do, which was to trust in the Practice and allow it to speak for itself. Now, apart from whatever is happening for the men as a result of our interactions, I am finding that the meetings at Potosi are among the most precious and profound learning experiences of my life.

-Susan Stone

We Need Your Feedback

For the first time in our history Mid America Dharma had to cancel a retreat because of low registration. There are several factors which could have contributed to this. First, Kamala Masters and Steven Armstrong, though international teachers, are not as well known in our area. Second, the cost was a little more than usual due to increased overhead costs. A third factor might be that it is difficult to arrange ten days off from work or a busy family life. We'd like to hear from you on this issue. We have two 9 day retreats on our schedule in 2000. Both require attendance at the full retreat rather than offering an optional weekend component as we usually do. We'd like to get your feedback on several things so that we can better serve the Midwest population. Please take a few moments to answer the following questions:

1. Mid America Dharma has two 9 day retreats 2000. One in March with Matthew Flickstein and one in late May with Eugene Cash, Joseph Goldstein, Myoshin Kelley and Sharda Rogell. Do you plan to attend one? If so, which one? Do you plan to attend both?
2. Do you enjoy retreats with one teacher and a smaller number of retreatants or retreats with more than one teacher and a larger number of retreatants?
3. Do you have any feedback about our retreat offerings or any suggestions for change or improvement?

Thank you so much for taking the time to respond to these questions. You can send your replies by regular mail to Mid America Dharma, PO Box 414411, Kansas City, MO 64141-4411, by email to <ginny@midamericadharm.org>, or you can call at (573) 817-9942. Your input is important to us so please take the time to respond.

Are You on Our Mailing List?

If you would like to receive future issues of *Mid America Dharma News* and you are not already on our mailing list or if the code after your name ends in 1996 or earlier, please drop a note to Marnie Hammer, c/o Mid America Dharma P.O. Box 414411 Kansas City, MO 64141-4411. E-mail: <johnmarn@gateway.net>. We are updating our mailing list and removing names from 1996 and prior. Please contact us now to remain on the mailing list and to continue receiving the newsletter.

Sangha News

St. Louis Insight Meditation Group meets every Sunday from 8-10 AM at the Big Bend Yoga Center (upstairs) 88 N. Gore, Webster Groves. We offer weekly sittings, instruction, and retreats. An Introduction To Insight Meditation class will be held on Fridays Nov 12, 17, Dec 3, 10 from 7:30PM till 9PM. For information call Elizabeth Fryer (314) 230-2388 or Susan Stone (314) 434-0747 or visit our website at: <http://hometown.aol.com/modharma/myhomepage/index.html>

Kansas City Area: Anyone interested in helping to start additional sitting groups, please call Marnie Hammer @ 816-523-5061

If you have news about your local Sangha, please let the editor know. Send your news to: Editor, Elizabeth Fryer 1509 Fawn Valley Drive St. Louis, MO 63131. e-mail: <modharma@aol.com>

Mid America Dharma Winter 2000 Retreat Schedule



Dec 30-Jan 2: *New Year's Residential Retreat with Santikaro Bhikkhu, Conception, MO*

The registrar for this retreat is: Don Brown, 608 N. 9th, Kansas City, KS 66101 (913) 321-4521

This retreat will provide basic instruction in the anapanasati (mindfulness with breathing) methods of vipassana (insight) meditation. The retreat is open to both beginning and experienced practitioners. All registration's postmarked or received after Dec 14 will be subject to a \$25 late charge. Final payment is due by and registration closes on Dec 21.

Santikaro Bhikkhu is an American, born and raised in the Chicago area, who went to Thailand with the Peace Corps and subsequently ordained as a monk in 1985. He is the senior monk at Suan Atammayatrma. For many years he has served as the English translator for Ajahn Buddhadasa. He is also the translator of Buddhadasa's *Mindfulness with Breathing* (Wisdom Publications, 1997) and the editor of Buddhadasa's *Heartwood of the Bodhi Tree* (Wisdom Publications, 1994.) For more information on anapanasati or more about Ajahn Buddhadasa please visit <<http://www.suanmokkh.org>>.



Jan 28-30: *Non-residential with Rodney Smith, Kansas City, MO*

The registrar for this retreat is: Marnie Hammer, 455 E. 80th Terrace Kansas City, MO 64131 (816) 523-5061, e-mail <johnmarn@gateway.net>.

This retreat will provide basic instruction in vipassana (insight) meditation and is open to beginning and experienced practitioners. Details about the retreat will be mailed to you upon registration. Space is limited so apply early.

Rodney Smith has been practicing vipassana meditation since 1975, including several years as a Buddhist monk in Asia. He is currently a senior teacher for Insight Meditation Society in Barre, MA. Rodney has been teaching meditation and working as a full-time hospice worker since 1984. He is the author of *Lessons from the Dying* (Wisdom Publication, 1998.)

Retreat Managers and Registrars Needed

If you are an experienced Vipassana meditator and want to help Mid America Dharma continue to provide top notch meditation retreats in the midwest area, we have an opportunity for you. Volunteer as a manager or registrar for the retreat of your choice and attend that retreat for free. Retreats are assigned on a first come first served basis. This is an excellent opportunity to use service as practice and is a way to support the continued availability of Vipassana practice opportunities in our region. Please contact Ginny Morgan at (573)817-9942 or <ginny@midamericadharma.org> to offer your services.

REGISTRATION FORM

If you are registering for more than one retreat please photocopy this form and send with payment to the listed registrar for each retreat. This form can also be located at <<http://midamericadharma.org/retreats.html>>.

Please Print:

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State _____ Zip: _____

Home Phone: _____

If you have special needs, please contact the listed registrar.

For Residential Retreatants only:

Gender: F M Do you snore? Y N

Will you arrive after 8 p.m. on the first day? Y N

Is this your first insight meditation retreat? Y N

_____ December 30-Jan 2: Residential retreat with Santikaro Bhikkhu, Cost: \$225 Single / \$210 Double. Minimum deposit of \$70. Cost after Dec 14: \$250 Single / \$235 Double. To register, please return this form with check payable to: Mid America Dharma 608 N. 9th, Kansas City, KS 66101.

_____ January 28-30 Non-residential retreat with Rodney Smith, Cost: \$50 To register please return this form with check payable to: Mid America Dharma 455 E. 80th Terrace, Kansas City, MO 64131. Please note that full payment is due at time of registration.

Amount Enclosed: \$ _____

Information on Mid America Dharma Group Retreats

INSIGHT MEDITATION offers an easily accessible way of freeing the mind from the distortions of self-centeredness, negativity and confusion. Through concentrated awareness, we can learn to see our experience as a constantly changing process, in which pleasure and pain, fear and joy, and all aspects of life are accepted with increasing balance and equanimity. This insight leads to an understanding of our true nature and the possibility of living each moment fully with compassion and genuine freedom. Insight Meditation requires no belief commitments and is compatible with religious affiliations. Unless specified by the retreat description, no previous meditation experience is required.

RETREAT FORMAT: Periods of sitting meditation will be alternated with walking meditation. *Retreats will be held in silence* with talking only during teaching periods. *Beginners must be present from the start of the retreat* to receive initial instructions.

Please bring a meditation cushion or bench and a soft floor pad for meditation. Standard chairs are available and may also be used.

Wear comfortable, loose fitting clothes. Please do not wear or bring strongly scented lotions, perfumes or incense.

Non-Residential Retreats will provide basic instruction in vipassana (insight) meditation. They are open to both beginning and experienced practitioners. Non-residential retreats are an opportunity for beginners to experience more intensive practice. Due to the length and size of the retreats, there will not be scheduled individual interviews.

Residential Retreats begin with check-in at 4 p.m. on the first day and run through lunch on the last day. Participants will be guided through group or private interviews and daily general lectures.

Meals are plain vegetarian. A complimentary tea table will be available. Please be responsible for any special dietary needs. Meals are not provided for non-residential retreats, unless indicated.

REGISTRATION: Information about retreat site, starting times and other details will be sent after you register.

Non-Residential Retreats: Please note that full payment is due at time of registration .

Residential Retreats: A minimum deposit of \$70 must accompany your registration. Full payment is due before the start of the retreat.

Registration Deadline: Registration for the New Years retreat closes on December 21. *Any registrations postmarked or received after Dec. 14 will be subject to a \$25 late charge.*

Retreat Costs: See the registration form on the previous page.

Refunds: No deposits will be refunded after the deadline. Please register as early as possible.

Scholarships: Inability to pay should not prevent you from attending, as there are scholarship funds set aside for this purpose. Deferred payment plans are also available. Contact the Registrar for a copy of the scholarship and deferred payment criteria. Written applications for scholarship must be received by the Registrar no later than three weeks prior to the retreat.

RETREAT REGISTRARS: Call with questions.

New Years Retreat - Don Brown, 608 N. 9th, Kansas City, KS
66101 (913)321-4521

Rodney Smith - Marnie Hammer, 455 E. 80th Terrace,
Kansas City, MO 64131 (816)523-5061
e-mail: johnmarn@gateway.net

Dana (or generosity): These retreats are led by teachers who freely give the teachings without any payment. All retreat fees go for retreat expenses. It is central to this tradition that the students support the teacher with a donation. There is no expected amount, but you are encouraged to give to the extent you are able. Dana is totally voluntary.

Mid America Dharma
P.O. Box 414411
Kansas City, MO 64141-4411

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