

# Summary of Annual Core Member Meeting

Saturday, December 3, 2016

## Purpose of Meeting

- to honor Core Members for their financial support
- to honor Volunteers for their crucial role in AIM's programs
- to acquaint potential Core Members with AIM's mission and needs
- to provide everyone with an update on AIM's current financial status and challenges
- to provide an open forum for suggestions and feedback
- to vote on some current policy issues

There were approximately 35 people in attendance at the meeting.

The meeting was conducted by the four members of AIM's Board of Directors currently in residence in Asheville: Ronya Banks, Scot Walker, Suzanne Hahn, and Giorgio Cave. David and Sherry Schweizer, who reside part of the year in Florida, were also involved in planning the meeting and sent their best wishes to all.

## Meeting Agenda

- **Hors d'oeuvres and socializing** (Trish Rux provided the bounteous feast of Hors d'oeuvres)
- **"State of the Sangha"** talk (Ronya). After thanking everyone who contributed to planning and organizing the meeting, Ronya gave a brief overview of AIM's history and challenges, leading up to the successful transition into our new, renovated facility, explained the critical importance of AIM's Core Member and Volunteer support, and introduced the members of AIM's Board of Directors and Leadership teaching team.
- **Volunteer Program** (Scot and Patricia). Scot gave an account of the history and structure of AIM's Volunteer program, including the formation of the Strategic Planning Committee and its Five Year Plan, and the creation of the current 5-Committee structure. The specific contributions of AIM's many volunteers were also recognized and acknowledged, and Patricia, our Volunteer Coordinator, talked about still unmet volunteer needs. We have the following specific volunteer needs:
  1. Additional Greeters
  2. Budgetary Planning Coordinator
  3. Website Assistant to Suzanne
  4. Advertising/Promotion Coordinator
  5. Strategic Alliances Coordinator
  6. Community Engagements Coordinator
  7. Retreat Coordinator \*
  8. Technology Assistant to Scot
  9. Equipment and Maintenance Coordinator
  10. Cleaning Team Back-Up
  11. Videographer \*

\* Note: these positions may be unnecessary or have already been filled
- **Financial Report** (Giorgio). Giorgio gave a breakdown of AIM's current financial status and goals.

### **Financial Goal: Core Member donations would cover regular monthly operating expenses of AIM**

Current AIM bank balance: \$9673

Current # of Core Members: 57

Current average monthly Core Member donation: \$34.47

Total monthly Core Member income: \$1965

Total monthly income from other sources: \$1405

Total monthly income from all sources: \$3370

Average average monthly operating expenses: \$3267

Total average monthly disposable income: \$106

Shortfall of Core Member donations to cover operating expenses: (\$1302)

- **Wish List of AIM Projects** (Suzanne). We are currently using income from the Dana jar to help cover monthly operating expenses. If we reach our goal of having Core Member donations cover all our basic operating expenses, then funds from the Dana jar would be available for unexpected expenses and enrichment and development of AIM programs. Suzanne delineated the high priority projects on our "Wish List" that we would like to undertake if we succeed in obtaining the necessary funding.
  1. Emergency fund for unexpected contingencies, HVAC breakdown, etc.
  2. Facility improvements for handicapped people
    - Door-opening buttons for the mobility-impaired
    - Sound system for the hearing-impaired
  3. New cushions and backjacks for increased seating comfort
  4. More classes offered that members have expressed interest in
  5. Community outreach programs to teach mindfulness meditation to those who cannot attend
  6. Publicizing AIM's special programs, such as Family Meditation and Tibetan singing bowls
  7. Offering scholarships for classes and retreats for those in financial need
  8. Financial assistance to members in crisis
  9. Being able to reimburse travel expenses to attract nationally-known guest speakers
  10. Increasing the poverty-level stipend of AIM Founder and Senior Teacher, Ronya Banks
- **End-of-Year Fundraising Drive** (Giorgio). Giorgio explained that to meet the goal AIM's Board of Directors has set to have Core Member donations cover our regular monthly operating expenses, the following is necessary:
  1. An increase in the average current Core Member donation to \$50 a month.
  2. Recruitment of 12 new Core Members at at least the current donation level.

**Personal Account:** Giorgio also shared his own personal story of why he values AIM and why he recently chose to increase his own support level, and invited other Core Members to consider whether the value to them of AIM might prompt a similar increase in support level.

- **Open Forum & Voting** (Ronya). Ronya then opened up the meeting for feedback and suggestions.

#### **The following suggestions and feedback were provided by those in attendance:**

~~Make the facility more handicap-accessible

~~Install a buzzer to open doors for the handicapped

~~Create a Core Member directory with photos so members can contact one another. Robert MacMillan is spearheading this project.

~~Create a visual board in the foyer of Core Member names and photos. Lynn and Syb volunteered to take photos of members who wish to be included on Thursdays and Sundays during the next few weeks, and Marcia and Toby volunteered to create the visual board for the foyer

~~Our librarian, Amy Vanderberghe was unable to attend, but Ronya conveyed Amy's concerns:

\*\*\*\* Many books are disappearing from the library at an alarming rate and NOT being returned \*\*\*\*

1. Use of the library is a special privilege and benefit accorded to Core Members. Some other attendees of the sangha are not honoring this restriction and removing books.
2. Some borrowers are not following the proper procedures for borrowing books, and NOT filling out a form in the back of the book so that we know who has the books out
3. Some borrowers are not returning their books within the designated 30-day time frame.
4. Amy has had to devote extra time as a volunteer to contact people and ask them to return their borrowed books
5. All members of the sangha who utilize the library are respectfully requested to return the books to the AIM library promptly without having to be contacted.

## The following issues were raised and voted on:

### ~~Should we lock the door to the meditation hall 5 minutes after meditation starts?

The consensus was that this would be too rigid a policy and that we should simply continue to request that if people arrive more than 5 minutes late that they meditate in the foyer and enter during the break.

### ~~Should we buy a sound system to make it easier for people to hear the speakers?

There was strong approval of this purchase and Syb volunteered to check out sound systems and report back.

### ~~Should we purchase some new mats and backjacks to replace those that are no longer comfortable?

There was approval of this purchase and Ronya will order the new mats and backjacks.

### ~~Should we have credit card availability for donations?

This was approved and Ronya will order the square reader required for our tablet.

### ~~What is the most reasonable compromise on the thermostat setting for the sangha?

It was decided to set the thermostat at 68 degrees during events and keep it at 62 degrees when the building is empty. This will be the policy on a trial basis subject to change if it proves unsatisfactory

## Conclusion

What cannot be adequately conveyed by this synopsis of the annual Core Member meeting is the warmth, spirit of camaraderie, and tangible sense of connection as a community that was evident at the meeting. In these troubled times, when our President-elect is actively pursuing a policy of confrontation, fragmentation, recrimination, and sowing of the seeds of division and disunity, nothing is more important, on the local level, than trying to create a strong, vibrant, united sense of community in support of the values of compassion, respect, inclusion, and social justice.

But this is not only a political imperative, but a spiritual imperative as well. The role of *sangha – community* – is central to the Buddha's teachings and to Buddhist practice. The sangha is one of the three pillars of refuge for the Buddhist practitioner, along with refuge in the Buddha and refuge in the Dharma. One of the things that is unique about Asheville Insight Meditation is the strong emphasis placed upon creating a diverse, supportive, multi-faceted spiritual community where so many of one's emotional, spiritual, intellectual, and even physical needs can be met, in short, a loving family of tolerant and caring individuals where one can both *belong*, and be *authentically oneself*, without fear of rejection because one is different in some respect from others. The sangha, like the Dharma, is a priceless jewel. Let us all nurture a sense of profound gratitude for the opportunity to belong to such a community, and let us all do all we can to ensure that this community survives and thrives.