

# MONASTIC ACADEMY

FOR THE PRESERVATION OF LIFE ON EARTH

## CEDAR

COMMUNITY FOR THE  
EXPERIENCE AND DEVELOPMENT OF  
AWAKENING AND RESPONSIBILITY

2020  
**SUMMER**  
QUARTERLY  
REPORT

## LETTER FROM PETER PARK



Dear friends,

As I gaze towards the Vermont mountains and green forest, I see monastics practicing outside with the blue sky and bountiful sunlight beaming down. As we enjoy summer's flourishing, we are also taking satisfaction in the hard work we've done.

This past quarter has been one of the most challenging and fruitful times in CEDAR's history. The COVID pandemic has seriously tested the group's capabilities. The residents struggled a great deal grappling with this unprecedented situation. Despite these challenges, we have emerged from this phase more cohesive and stronger group.

This past quarter, several residents went into intensive solitary meditation cabin retreats including Tasshin, Daniel, Lauren, Seishin, and myself. The *New York Times* wrote an article on Daniel's solitary retreat amidst the COVID pandemic. Each of us feels the cabin retreat was the most joyous and most challenging experience of our lives. We are grateful for the great gift to be supported by our community. It gives me hope for humanity that the experience of letting go and reconnecting with truth and nature is better than anything that could be acquired in the material world.

Furthermore, many residents here took a major step forward. Six residents underwent lay ordination with Shinzen Young and Soryu Forall. They received new sashes and new names with a firm commitment to save all sentient beings.

COVID seriously challenged our finances with reduced guest capacity and thereby reduced donations. We have been blessed that long-term donors have continued to give their annual and monthly gifts. A few individuals have given new gifts, and we have drastically cut back our costs in certain areas.

Despite the global unrest and pandemic, we have managed to continue onward. Our bedrooms are fuller than ever with fourteen residents and five apprentices. We have three additional residents scheduled to join us in the next few months. Several residents extended their commitments to training at MAPLE by one to three years. The allure of worldly pursuits has decreased with the coronavirus pandemic and protests sparked by police brutality. Our message increasingly makes sense in this context of broken human systems, misaligned value, and a culture that is clearly causing harm. As a community, we are leaning into the world's transition period as an opportunity to heal the relationship between humanity and the planet.

In friendship,

**Peter Park**

Executive Director



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## THREE-YEAR REVIEW

We have moved through difficult periods. We have overcome many struggles. And now, we celebrate. Some of you may be familiar with this journey, others may not.

We moved through a time when we slept on thin camping mats on the floor, in close quarters, many people to a room. Our individual spaces were divided by small book shelves. They were repainted and chipped down through blue paint, then black paint, then pink paint, to particle board that could hardly remain upright.

We moved to a new location with a dedicated meditation space. It was good to have our own space to sit in each day, but it wasn't heated, and we kept the doors open in hopes the heat from the rest of the building would keep the pipes from freezing.

We went through a time when we didn't know how to be financially sustainable. We had many ideas about what we were doing, but none of them were very good. We thought we might have a sugaring operation, making maple syrup as a spiritual practice that would make money. We thought of having a green cemetery as a spiritual practice that might make money. We thought of many ideas and put them up on the wall, and the best way to assess their value is to simply acknowledge that they didn't happen.

That was painful. That was difficult. That was a cause for insecurity and interpersonal strain.

We went through the difficulty of needing to move from that place suddenly, due to issues out of our control. We had to struggle as a community to decide, "*Are we going to put forth the effort to move when we don't have the money to move?*" We had to decide if we would learn the skills of success in the world, along with the skills of wisdom and love, and integrate them so that this actually works.

We went through the terrible struggle of choosing whether to do what's perfect, and cease to exist, or do what is good, insufficiently good, and thereby continue to strive. This is a difficult decision, and people continue to disagree about it.

We went through the struggle of coming to Lowell, and at times having no more than six people to care for this entire property, fundraise for it, shop, cook, and deal with people's stress and turmoil.

We stayed together, a few of us, through this period of doubt, exhaustion, and insecurity. There are a few dozen people who have done the work, made the sacrifice, that allows us to send this to you now.





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## THREE-YEAR REVIEW

They, you, are the reason we can send this letter of celebration today.

Let us not forget that it was hard. We paid a price.

And then, we were through that stage. Things shifted. It turned out that it was possible to train the group in personal development, so that it was no longer just me telling people about meditation and insights and surrender, but others knew it for themselves and could speak about it in their own way. It was possible to train the group in fundraising, so that I no longer brought in 90% of the income, but others could enable donors to support the organization also.

We found ways of communicating this to the world. Many of us worked on it, and one of us, Daniel Thorson, found a new way to get the message out. Now we have more people who want to train here than we can host. We found our place in this human ecosystem.

We discovered how to care for each other. We discovered how to care for each other without letting each person's emotional issues derail our work. This is a skill, and it's not intuitive, but one of us, Autumn Turley, led the way in developing this skill in our community.

We now have this incredible property, with a beautiful, caring community, serving the world through ethical means, with a sense of direction, a commitment to compassion, awakening and social & environmental responsibility. And we now have the new zendo, which is astonishing.

We have it partially because we're blessed in ways we can't understand, and partially because we're blessed with Peter Park, who managed the construction of this building, while working on bigger things as well. We sit every day in the building that represents his hard work, his gift to this community and to the world.

And we have a location in California, OAK, led by Jōshin, enabled by his dedication to the good of the world. OAK is using this practice to overcome the risk to life on the planet caused by the human tendency to invent dangerous things. This tendency is caused by the mind that invents those things, and OAK is working to resolve the problems with existential risk through training people to escape from their minds.

We use this gift to make a shift in our minds, so we can make a shift in the way community forms, so we can make a shift in the culture that emerges from that community, so we can impact the larger culture, so we can change the way the economy functions, so we can save life on this planet from the greed, hatred, and delusion that dominate the human mind. This is the integration of our own spiritual awakening and our responsibility to all living things.

Incredible. Let us celebrate.

- Soryu Forall, Head Teacher of CEDAR



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## OAK (CALIFORNIA)



This past quarter has been a time of adaptation and response. As the COVID-19 pandemic unfolded, OAK had to make a number of rapid decisions and to adopt an increasingly improvisational style. Fortunately, our training prepared us for this, and the practice of the Dharma has been a continual support throughout.

Due to the pandemic, many of our in-person events had to be canceled or made remote. It has also been a challenge to meet and connect with potential donors who might support our work. Additionally, we face housing uncertainty due to an ongoing zoning process with the city of Berkeley, and this has made it harder to make commitments and plan ahead for our apprenticeship and residential training programs. These problems compound each other, as does the broader tension and uncertainty in the world.

Despite these challenges, this past quarter we have done impressive, exemplary work in the areas of both Awakening and Responsibility. We have continued to host dedicated in-person Awakening retreats and are one of very few centers in the US that have been able to do so during the pandemic. We have taken concrete, meaningful steps towards our mission of bringing wisdom and compassion to those who create AI and other emerging technologies. We remain on target to complete the round of apprenticeships we committed to doing this year for those working on existential risk reduction. We have also begun an ambitious fundraising push to secure a more resilient position as we move forward.

Our Awakening training has continued uninterrupted through the pandemic, and in fact we have gained momentum. Our most recent Awakening period was our largest so far at this location, and included both long-term, dedicated residents and incoming guests who were able to go deep and let go in a short amount of time. We attribute this success partially to our community's growing maturity, and partially to the increased sense of urgency people in the world feel nowadays. It is more clear than ever that we must live our true life, and that the patterns we've given our lives to are not trustworthy. We come to this training to break free and live a life of joy and service.

This quarter we also expanded our community service drastically. In addition to our long-term residential training program, we've focused on two components: community connection calls offering mindful presence and emotional support in addition to short-term Awakening training periods for community members. These offerings come in response to community members who have come to us with problems brought to the surface by the impacts of the pandemic. We've been offering the Dharma, our own hearts, and our physical location as a refuge for those in need, who may then take what they've received and offer it as a gift to their own networks and housemates. Some have implemented a lay-monastic schedule at home and others are bringing in chanting or other mindfulness practices to their own communities.

As much as this success sustains us, we realize that we urgently need both a suitable long-term physical location and the resources to continue to offer these gifts to the world. Our current funding will last us to the end of the year, but we still need to raise funding for next year. And we know from experience that unless and until we find stable, long-term housing, our efforts will continually be distracted by challenges in that domain.



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## OAK (CALIFORNIA)

On the housing side, we suspect and hope that real estate prices will fall in the Bay Area in the coming months and that the ongoing chaos will provide many unpredictable, good opportunities. Therefore we hope to raise pledges towards a strategic housing fund that will allow us to respond to the right opportunity as soon as it arises, without having to wait for one to show up in order to start raising funds for it.

We also need to secure funding to run our program. We aim to raise \$150,000 for our operating budget for next year, covering food, travel, utilities, and other basic expenses, as well as either rent or mortgage payments and maintenance. Beyond that, we want to establish a fund to allow residents and apprentices to train in other modalities, such as Circling or the Bio-Emotive Framework. As a final stretch goal, we would like to create an online presence and brand to represent OAK's programs and mission. A former apprentice has connected us with a design firm offering to do a comprehensive branding and website project at a steep discount from their usual prices.

Therefore our funding targets are:

- \$2,500,000 pledged towards acquiring a long-term property
- \$150,000: operating budget for 2021
- \$35,000: (stretch) training fund
- \$15,000: (stretch) branding and website design

\$2,500,000 total pledges

\$200,000 total direct funding

Your support and practice sustain us. We value our relationships during these uncertain times. We hope that together we can navigate through this period of history, offering our lives for the benefit of all living beings.



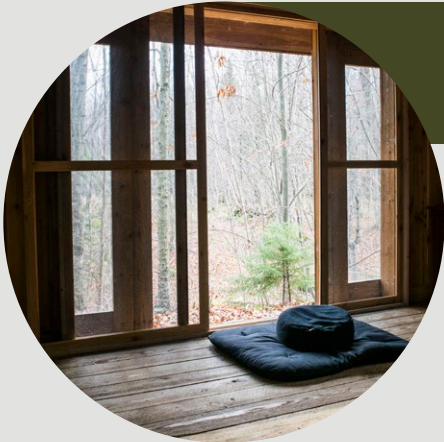
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## SOLO RETREATS

Both residents and apprentices at the Monastic Academy have significantly deepened their practice. To support this development, we sent five residents into solitary retreat for several months. Over the past two months, they have come out of retreat to offer their insights and wisdom to the group. Here are some of the teachings that each retreatant gave upon rejoining the community.

*"If an hour or day comes where you feel a deep desperation, know that it doesn't have to be awful. You can learn very quickly how to feel it without it being awful." -- Tasshin Fogleman*

*"Thousands of times on this retreat, I experienced that, no matter what was happening, kindness and love are always the right answer." -- Daniel Thorson*

*"I'd notice I was getting attached to something or getting obsessed with a thought, and I'd say 'dream,' and then I'd be out of it. It was great. It felt good. It wasn't suffering. It wasn't a terrible experience. I could really, actually see the trees and the stars and be with my body, and it was a wonderful experience." -- Peter Park*

*"It's easier when you actually output your maximum energy each moment. There's just something each moment that carries you, and it's not so hard or painful." -- Lauren Lee*

*"I think the most important thing is to just keep doing the technique without caring whether it works." -- Seishin Todorovic*

While spending weeks in a cabin in the woods may sound peaceful and idyllic, undertaking a solitary retreat of this nature actually requires great courage and fortitude. Without the distractions of technology, socializing, or work, retreatants set out to face head-on their deepest fears, insecurities, and challenges with nothing but their practice to carry them through it. This is the basis of doing the deep work of facing the qualities in our minds of greed, hatred, laziness, anxiety, and needless doubts. We purify our minds of these qualities that contribute to the destruction of life on earth, thus becoming leaders capable of guiding others to do the same. It is with deep gratitude that we welcome these five leaders back into our community and support them in stepping into a greater level of leadership.



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## VILLAGE



We have made important strides towards our long-term plan to build a community of homes (MAPLE Village) around our training center. As we prepare to bring more people to live with us on our land, we have begun designing our infrastructure to be more eco-friendly. Some of our local friends and supporters have worked with us in these efforts. Their help and enthusiasm has really made this project into a community effort as we work to lower our footprint. If you want to help make MAPLE even more sustainable, we would love your support and ideas.

Ever since we bought this property, we have had the dream of converting our electricity source to solar. Finally, this dream is becoming a reality. The Solar Moonshot Program has generously granted us \$25,000 to start on the first phase of this project. This first phase will cover almost a third of our electrical expenses annually. We plan to expand the array so that we can be net zero in the future. If you'd like to help us, you can propel us towards this goal by purchasing a panel for us. Each one costs about \$1,000 with parts, labor, and electric work.

One of our supporters donated his time, money, and skills to help us build an industrial-scale high-efficiency clothesline, which was conceived in such an ingenious way that it will be usable even during Vermont winters. Many residents and apprentices worked on the construction project and learned valuable skills in design and construction. Lowering our electricity usage is important, and we're equally excited about the skills and experience our trainees are gaining.

Finally, one of our apprentices helped us to plan and build our first garden on the property, and a friendly neighbor is donating plants and supplies to help us keep it going. This project gives us a first-hand opportunity to cultivate a direct relationship with the food that nourishes us and the earth which gives us life.

The most exciting news about the village is the long-awaited arrival of incoming villagers! Richard and Renee Dee, supporters and very dear friends of the community, plan to be joining us as Monastic Villagers next year. Richard and Renee met in music school in 1977 and married in 1978. Rich played the clarinet professionally and eventually opted for a job in the corporate sector to provide security for their family. They have two grown children, Jōshin Steven Dee and Emily Dee. A bassoonist, Renee pursued a career in the arts, performing, teaching, and managing arts organizations. They have recently retired from these professional pursuits and are eagerly looking forward to moving to the MAPLE Village in the very near future.

Over the next year, we aim to build the infrastructure for the village, including state permitting, roads, and septic. There is ever-increasing interest from the larger community to be involved. We believe that the village will foster a form of deep community based on friendship and integrity that will be a model for the world. This unique interweaving of people dedicated to putting their comfort and pleasure aside for the greater vision of a world at peace will be a powerful force for the future.





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## FUNDRAISING

During these times of great fear, isolation, and uncertainty, the training that MAPLE has to offer is needed now more than ever. At the same time, fundraising has become a great challenge as our guest revenue has plummeted, and the world faces great economic uncertainty. MAPLE has responded to this challenge by getting all residents and apprentices even more involved in fundraising and increasing community outreach. We have been deeply touched and inspired to see our supporters continue to show up for us even during times such as these.



Peter Park, our executive director, went into a 10-week solo cabin retreat in mid-March. Before going into the cabin, Peter set a fundraising goal for 80% of the people training at MAPLE to raise money from someone who didn't previously have a relationship with the organization. He set this goal knowing it was very ambitious and that the group might not succeed. What's more, he set the goal before it became clear how COVID-19 would impact the world and the economy. MAPLE residents and apprentices rose to the challenge. Senior residents trained new residents and apprentices in the skills of fundraising, and everyone needed to step out of their comfort zone.

Ten weeks later, our efforts have paid off. Ninety percent of the people training at MAPLE succeeded in raising money from new contacts! This endeavor increased our confidence, as well as our skill in fundraising. It also proved that people in the world at large see our work as valuable. Even during uncertain times, people who have never even visited MAPLE are willing to financially support us because they see the benefit of supporting the work MAPLE is doing for the world.

Surpassing our goal for 80% success signals the success of a larger effort. Two years ago, we created a program to train all residents in fundraising. We've now expanded that program by involving apprentices in fundraising throughout their time at MAPLE. This practice of fundraising is about more than just raising money; it connects us to the world at large. Our supporters give because they trust us to use these gifts to do good in the world. Each day we strive to become ever more trustworthy in our integrity, our decision-making, and our practice. We are proud that our alumni have the skills and experience needed to raise funds for important service projects. In this way, the practice of fundraising has the power to transform the way we live.

Over one and a half million US nonprofit employees have been laid off so far in the United States due to the financial impact of the COVID-19 crisis. We feel immense gratitude that your support has enabled us to continue doing the work necessary to create a way of life that can be a refuge in times of crisis. Now more than ever, each donation enables us to offer the gift of deep practice and community. By supporting us, you are empowering a new culture based on honesty, compassion, and trustworthiness so that all beings may rely on humans for care.



## FINANCIALS

This year, MAPLE has been fortunate in receiving gifts from longtime supporters as well as new supporters. Last quarter, we highlighted the contribution from Richard and Renee Dee of \$250,000. This quarter, we've received several gifts ranging from hundreds of dollars to eighty thousand dollars. However, as our pool of donors reaches its limits, continuing to find sources of funding will be pivotal.

Year to date, MAPLE's revenue is \$469,768 while spending \$173,881. The projected 2020 budget for Vermont was to raise \$686,000, thus leaving \$221,232 still to be raised.

While we've been very fortunate these first two quarters, we still have a ways to go to fulfill our vision and makeup for our lost guest revenue. OAK's revenue is \$12,253 with expenses at \$55,661.

In Spring 2017, we purchased the MAPLE property on faith that the importance of our mission would drive our ability to find resources. Family and friends pitched in giving gifts and loaning money for a total of \$1,366,000. Due to generous offers of loan forgiveness and gifts, our current loan for the MAPLE property is \$904,679.

Last year, we embarked on expanding our guest programs. MAPLE guest income year-to-date has been only \$35,600 of the projected \$130,000 for the year. We cannot rely this year or in the foreseeable future on guest revenue and the associated guest donations. Instead we are doing more outreach than ever to old and new supporters along with future village families.

As we highlight below in the Fundraising Page, we have reached a major milestone in that residents and apprentices are successfully raising funds through community outreach. With the onset of COVID, we have been reaching out to family and friends to connect, care, and share our experiences. Many of the residents have been uplifted by the generous support that their loved ones have reciprocated in small donations. This crucial effort resulted not only in new supporters, but we are learning pivotal lessons to let go of our fear of money in order to marshal the resources needed to do good for the sake of the planet's health.

### 2ND QUARTER

GUEST INCOME	DONATIONS	LOAN FORGIVENESS	*TOTAL INCOME
\$19,039	\$140,209	\$0	\$167,388

\*This includes more income than the three types listed

### 2020 YEAR-TO-DATE

GUEST INCOME	DONATIONS	LOAN FORGIVENESS	*TOTAL INCOME
\$35,604	\$390,500	\$1,000	\$487,256

\*This includes more income than the three types listed

## LEADERSHIP EMERGES: PROFILE ON ALEX “KŌSHIN” FLINT



### INTERVIEW WITH KŌSHIN:

Kōshin was born in Australia to two loving parents who loved the outdoors. His father was a software engineer and taught him to program computers at a young age. In high school and college, he began participating in computer programming problem-solving competitions, which took him overseas and introduced him to academic life, since these contests were mostly held at universities. After college he decided to apply for graduate school, and he ended up going to Oxford to study robotics. During his time in Oxford, he was introduced to the basic ideas that would shape the next ten years of his life: entrepreneurship, artificial intelligence, existential risk.

In 2019, he attended a talk by Soryu and then began visiting the OAK community each morning to sit together and eat breakfast together. This community practice was incredibly enriching, and through the practice, he felt an aliveness that he hadn't felt for many years. This experience planted a seed that ultimately led to him training as an apprentice at OAK and MAPLE, taking lay ordination, and now becoming a resident at OAK.

#### *Why did you join the CEDAR Mindfulness and Leadership training residency?*

I joined because I was deeply moved by the experience of chanting, sitting and eating with the OAK community as a visitor. I didn't know that such nourishing bonds could come from sitting in silence together. I didn't realize how much I was trying to do alone what CEDAR was doing in community, and once I saw what it was like to do it in community, I didn't want to do it alone any more.

#### *How have you benefited from your time at CEDAR?*

The rigid ropes of insecurity, anxiety, selfishness, and in general delusion have been just slightly loosened. There is a particular thread of research that I have been trying to pursue for almost 10 years, but I have been too afraid to step up and actually do the work. Now this work is finally happening and I realize that the work itself is easy, joyful, and fulfilling. It's getting to the point of being willing to do the work that is difficult, painful, and despairing. During my time at MAPLE I was constantly in the presence of a wise and loving community, and in that way was finally able to work through some of this pain and despair.

#### *What has been your biggest challenge?*

The most difficult part has been facing the tragic harm that my past actions have caused to many living beings, including myself. It's not easy to atone for our sins. We must be willing to look clearly into our nature, see how tremendously short we are falling of our aspirations, and somehow find not shame but confidence in this clear seeing. How can we do this? There is a great confidence that comes from finally humbling ourselves before the world and letting go of our views of ourselves as either a good person or a bad person.

#### *What are your goals/what are you looking forward to as you continue to train here?*

I'm looking forward to becoming a better and better friend.





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## MOVING FORWARD

This past winter and spring were periods of intensive awakening practice. With Soryu taking time away from his daily responsibilities at MAPLE this summer and fall to work on a book and teach at OAK, MAPLE will transition into more responsibility work and adult development training under Peter's guidance.

This summer we will continue our seventh Circling Interpersonal Meditation Retreat, do our third Awakened Leadership Intensive (ALI) program, and plan to do our second Bio-Emotive Emotional Clearing Retreat. These programs empower us to develop ourselves so that we may throw ourselves into awakening and service. Each of these programs is a unique offering, which can't be found at any other retreat or monastic training center: residential week-long programs embedded in a living, breathing community that strives to embody and live the practices of Wisdom, Love, and Power. These practices help residents become the skillful facilitators, pastors, friends, leaders, and teachers the world needs.

As we peer into the rest of the year, we are faced with a new, good problem. A little over a year ago, MAPLE only had seven residents. We've made such great strides that today we have fourteen residents with a constant cycle of 4-6 apprentices. In one year's time, we have closed the gap and now have to turn people away with hundreds of applicants in the past year. The question is, how can we accommodate the high number of dedicated, skilled people who want to train here as we run out of space?

Having the optimal resident numbers is a major milestone. We have proven we can support several residents simultaneously in solitary retreat. But, now, this next year's challenge will be training teachers while learning how to go beyond mere financial survival, despite these uncertain times, into a period of flourishing. MAPLE's aspiration goes beyond paying off its debts, goes beyond continuing to train an unprecedented high number of trainees. We must lay the groundwork for our next centers, our next teachers, our next communities.

A pivotal step in this plan for our growth and flourishing both communally and financially will be MAPLE Village. We hope to begin construction on our first home this next year. Several families have become increasingly interested in living here alongside a core of monastics striving for freedom and the world's welfare. These villagers will be able to set their own schedule and raise their families while benefiting from living in relationship with the monastics. Together, the world will benefit from the new social, economic, and cultural patterns and relationships that we create together.

This next quarter, we will continue to invest in the future, acknowledging that the world is always uncertain. As we begin installation of solar panels and harvesting from our garden during the next quarter, we harvest the fruits of the hard work we have done in service for all beings. Your involvement in this community is a great gift to the world and to us. May we continue to find the courage and compassion to do this most important work for the sake of all life.



# SUMMER SCHEDULE

**July 17 - 24**

Circling Interpersonal Meditation Retreat

**August 12 - 18**

Vision Quest with Darren Silver

**September 18 - 25**

Bio-Emotive Emotional Clearing Retreat

*All events subject to change or cancellation based on developing news/events*

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## JOIN US

You are always welcome to visit for a day, a week, a month, or longer.

**Our address is:**

**751 Page Rd**

**Lowell, VT 05847**

If you'd like to come, or to be in touch for any reason, please email at [info@monasticacademy.org](mailto:info@monasticacademy.org) or call at 802-540-0820.

Together we are building a whole new culture.

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