



# Heartwood

NEWSLETTER OF THE WATERLOO RIVERVIEW DHARMA CENTRE

SUMMER 2004

## ***Coordinator's Message***

*Susan Child*

Twenty-five thousand people, including many of our sangha, attended the public talk given by the Dalai Lama, in Toronto, on April 24. Everyone who attended was deeply touched by his presence and his message. There is a Tibetan Buddhist prayer:

*All sentient beings have the Buddha nature,  
To realize it to be free from ignorance,  
and put an end to suffering.  
I dedicate my life and my practice  
to the enlightenment of all beings.*

The Dalai Lama is an embodiment of Buddha nature and the motivation in this prayer. In his humble, wise and authentic presence, the Dalai Lama embodies genuine goodness, and we are deeply affected by him. We have a tendency to see this radiant goodness as something separate from ourselves, however the Dalai Lama, through his presence, provides a mirror for us to see our own inherent goodness- our own Buddha nature. What the

Dalai Lama embodies and radiates is who we fundamentally are.

Justin Trudeau, in his introductory remarks, said that Canadians have the same qualities as the Dalai Lama, "we're just not as good at it". There was much laughter at this statement, yet I think many of us left our encounter with the Dalai Lama feeling more inspired to actualize the potential for that goodness within us.

But how do we keep that aspiration alive? It seems all too easily our habitual patterns reassert themselves, and we forget what we are aspiring to awaken to. In his teachings the following week at Kalchakra, His Holiness repeatedly emphasized the importance of listening to Dharma teachings, reflecting on their meaning, looking inward through meditation practice, and understanding our underlying motivation. We can use the teachings, the practice and our connection with like-minded people (Sangha) as a reminder.

*May all beings awaken to their true potential!*

### ***Thomas and the Dalai Lama***

*Thomas Goos, Age 7*

It was really cold and windy when we got to the Skydome. Before we went in, we saw 2 umbrellas flip upside-down in a way! When we got in we had to go through a metal detector and Mommy's shoes went off because she had metal toes! Once we found our seats we had to wait for a while before it began. When it started we didn't see the Dalai Lama, but people came up and danced a good luck dance. Then they showed us a little movie about Tibet. It was about the Chinese and how a boy Lama was kidnapped. That was when the Dalai Lama came out. I thought he was funny and nice.



## *Remembering Rob MacDonald*

Gordon Renwick

*The world is but a star at dawn,  
A bubble in a stream,  
A flash of lightning in a summer cloud,  
A flickering lamp, a phantom and a dream.*  
-The Diamond Sutra

On April 29th, our good friend and Dharma brother Rob Macdonald died from a gunshot wound to the head, suffered a week earlier during a robbery in Port au Spain, Trinidad. Those of us who knew him continue to struggle with the shock, the disbelief, the horror, the enormity of what has happened, and our hearts go out to his wife Kate, and his three young children.

I remember the first time I met Rob. It was a Tuesday night in Susan Child's living room, the location of the Dharma Centre at the time. His thin face, prominent nose and full beard gave him a Lincolnesque countenance. He was wearing a checked flannel shirt (Rob was never a flashy dresser). He seemed shy and said nothing that night - a rather unremarkable man. How deceiving first appearances can be.

I saw him from time to time after that, but it was during the David Brazier retreat in Hillsburgh a few years ago that our relationship ripened. A freak cold snap in October required a change in accommodations, most of the men ending up quartered in bunk beds in one small room. The intimacy of that arrangement forced us out of our usual reserve.

Rob and I drew the same work detail that weekend, digging a hole in the stony ground to bury some trash.

As we conversed, leaning on our shovels, we soon found common ground. Both of us had been in the Navy - Rob was an Engineering Officer for thirteen years, I had been an Officer Cadet for a brief time before washing out in flying school. He began to warm to his subject, regaling me with stories of life aboard Her Majesty's Canadian Ships - skeet shooting on the afterdeck to stave off boredom, adventures in various ports of call, the throb and diesel stink of a ship's engine room - but what really emerged was his wry sense of humour and vast intelligence.

From then on we always found a few moments to talk before or after sessions at the Dharma Centre where we both became Sunday morning regulars. Over the years he gave me good advice when my car was acting up, told me how to extract a floppy disk from the drawer of a computer that had shut down, and repaired more than a few audio tapes that had been chewed up in the Dharma Centre's ghetto blaster when I facilitated in Susan's absence.

He was, after all, an Associate Professor of Engineering at the University of Waterloo. Many people who knew him casually expressed surprise upon learning how accomplished a man he was, as he was such a natural and unassuming person. Several months ago, as I watched Rob disappear along Allen St., I remarked to another friend that we should all go out for dinner one night soon. It was the last time I ever saw him.

Rob, your tragic and untimely death has taught me that every moment of existence is precious, to be lived in awareness. Wherever your journey takes you, I wish you fair sailing as you navigate the Infinite Ocean of Buddhature.





## **Reflections from the Board Chair- Glancing Back, Looking Forward, Being Present**

*John Lord*

Like most leadership groups, the role of the Dharma Centre Board of Directors is filled with challenges and opportunities. Our responsibility is learn from our past and to vision our future while staying grounded in the present. Let us look briefly at each of these responsibilities in terms of the current Dharma Centre.

A leadership group needs to glance back from time to time to be sure that they are learning from their past. By the end of 2003, our Dharma Centre was in the black financially. This was an important step in our efforts to balance our books each year. This happened because of some very effective fundraising and the generosity of members during the Celebration of Giving. Our membership also grew in 2003, consistent with the growing interest in mindfulness and meditation. We did some things right during the last year and we can build on that experience. Thanks to everyone who made 2003 such a good year.

A Board's responsibility is also to vision the future. Board members listen to the aspirations of members in this process of discerning the future. In the last few months, members have told us that

they appreciate the King St. space, and we anticipate using it for at least another year. Our long-term goal is to have a slightly larger space downtown. As we have grown, we now see the need to have at least two retreat events a year for our members. Part of our vision is to continue to build the Sangha (community) and to develop some outreach capacity to do good work with others.

Being present is, of course, our biggest challenge. As a Board, we do this by meditating before meetings, by following respectful guidelines for decision-making, by having a member remind us if we are off track, by facilitating good process, and by working collaboratively on projects. We have built a strong trust for each other and for the principles we all believe in. A strong organization needs a strong Board who will lead by example and by engagement. We hope we are doing this, and welcome your continued ideas, comments, and criticism. We would also welcome two new Board members for the next two years. Please call or email me if you are interested. It is a great way to practice being present, while glancing back, and looking forward. (John's e-mail is [johnlord\\_8@sympatico.ca](mailto:johnlord_8@sympatico.ca))

## **Psychoneuroimmunology- Science Tips its' Hat to Ancient Wisdom**

*Scott Mackay*

Eastern religion and medicine is full of references to the trinity of mind, body and spirit. For thousands of years, their harmony or disharmony has been equated with a person's degree of wellness. Western medicine and science have long been skirting around this idea, preferring to isolate and treat the mind and body individually. However, a new scientific discipline known as Psychoneuroimmunology is melding Eastern philosophies with Western scientific methods to explore the links between mind, body, and spirit. Not surprisingly, they are verifying what shamans and meditators have been teaching for millenia. (continued, next page...)





## ***Psychoneuroimmunology*** cont'd

As the Buddha said in the Dhammapada “*Mind is chief, forerunner of all states*”. What occurs in the interaction between emotions and thoughts in the mind can have a tremendous influence on the body. Psychoneuroimmunology (PNI) studies interactions between the brain, the nervous system, the endocrine system (hormones and glands), and the immune system. In a general sense, these latter three function as the gateway between mind and body. Although we commonly observe our own interactions between mind and body while meditating, it has not until recently been objectively measurable by outside observers.

In recent study, PNI researchers from the University of Wisconsin at Madison measured the immune system response of two general types of individuals- those who respond more pessimistically to negative events, and those who respond more optimistically. The groups were separated by measuring individuals’ brain activity in a part of the brain called the pre-frontal cortex. The volunteers for the test were each asked to recall a memory which made them feel very happy, and one which made them feel sad, angry, or afraid. Those who showed more activity on the left side of the pre-frontal cortex were placed in an “optimistic” group, while those with more activity on the right side were placed in a “pessimistic” group. The volunteers in each group were then given a flu shot and their immune response to the vaccine was measured. Those in the “pessimistic” group had a measurably poorer immune response (lower antibody production) than people from the “optimistic” group. The implication being that negative thoughts may reduce one’s ability to fight off disease.

In another study, the same set of techniques was used on two different groups of people- those who received eight weeks of mindfulness meditation training (from Jon Kabat-Zinn) and those who did not. Results showed that not only did the group that received meditation training show more positive emotional responses as indicated by brain activity, but also that their immune response was better than those in the group which did not receive the meditation training.

Although this type of scientific research is still in its’ infancy, members of a collaborative called the “Mind and Life Research Network” have already identified a set of key questions in relation to the benefits of meditation. The network is composed of both scientists and notable Buddhist leaders and teachers such as His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Mingyur Rinpoche, Jon Kabat-Zinn, and Joan Halifax Roshi. Their list of key questions for future research include- Can meditation be used to change brain circuits associated with emotions? Do different kinds of meditation produce distinct brain effects? Does the development of certain areas of the brain through meditation prevent illness? How long does it take before meditation produces certain brain changes?

“*Mind is chief, forerunner of all states*”. Twenty five hundred years later, these sentiments are echoed by one of the PNI researchers, Dr. Richard Davidson. “Emotions play an important role in modulating bodily systems that influence our health. We turned to the brain to understand the mechanisms by which the mind influences the body.”





## **Psychoneuroimmunology** cont'd

For those of you interested in learning more about this subject, the Dharma Centre will soon have copies of two books on its' shelves- "Destructive Emotions" and "Healing Emotions", both by Daniel Goleman. You may also enjoy a visit to the Mind and Life Institute's web page- [www.mindandlife.org](http://www.mindandlife.org), or the University of Madison at Wisconsin Brain and Emotions Research web page- <http://www.news.wisc.edu/packages/emotion>.

## **Book Review- Full Catastrophe Living by Jon Kabat-Zinn**

Gordon Renwick

The intriguing title of this most excellent book refers to a scene from the film **Zorba The Greek**, in which a companion asks Zorba if he has ever been married. He replies: "Of course. Wife, house, kids, everything ... the full catastrophe." Zorba uses catastrophe to mean embracing life in all of its aspects, including the inescapable pain, illness, failure and frustration that form the counterbalance to love, joy, health and success.

Full Catastrophe Living is about healing, recovering the wholeness in our lives, despite the fact that we may have an illness. It is about forming healthy attitudes to illness, coming to terms with and managing the accompanying pain and stress. Its author maintains that mental and emotional factors, the ways in which we think and behave, have a significant effect, for better or worse, on our physical health.

Jon Kabat-Zinn is the founder and director of the Stress Reduction Clinic at the University of Massachusetts Medical Centre. The Stress Clinic, as it is commonly known, has helped more than four thousand people over the past ten years, using ancient, time-tested techniques rooted in Yogic and Zen Buddhist traditions - mindfulness, breathwork, hatha yoga and meditation. The reader is allowed inside the Stress Clinic to glimpse participants as they begin the eight week program. Included are people from all walks of life, their faces etched with the pain and distress of the entire spectrum of disease: headaches, high blood pressure, back pain, heart disease, cancer, AIDS - the full catastrophe.

As they work through the program, the vast majority are transformed in body, mind and spirit. Kabat-Zinn says the difference is most apparent on their faces.

This is no armchair program: the price of admission is a major personal commitment to change; taking the time and energy to practice yoga and breathwatching, to meditate, to work towards nurturing calmness and self-acceptance. "[P]ractice whether you feel like it or not," Kabat-Zinn says, "whether it is convenient or not ... practice with the determination of an athlete. [T]he dividends are worth the investment."

One man, confined to a wheelchair, was suffering from pain in his feet so excruciating he wanted them amputated. Within a week or two he had graduated to a walker, then to crutches and finally a cane. Had he been cured? No. As Dr. Kabat-Zinn relates: "the pain hadn't changed much, but his attitude toward his pain had changed a lot - he was managing it instead of suffering from it - taking charge."



**Book Review** cont'd

What are the components of the Stress Reduction Program? How does mindfulness foster healing? Being mindful is the art of living in the moment, being centred in the here and now, not dwelling in the past or worrying about the future. By watching, or meditating upon the breath, which is occurring moment by moment, it is possible to drop below the surface agitations of the mind, to anchor awareness in the body, to discover new realms of calmness and stability. After all, we have only moments to live, and the aggregate of these moments is our lives.

Mindfulness leads to self-awareness, to wholeness and connectedness, getting us in touch with our own inner strengths and resources. It is a powerful vehicle for self-understanding and healing. Breathing, something we do automatically, unconsciously, is the key. It is possible to go without food for weeks, without water for days, but deny our bodies breath for a few minutes and we begin to die. According to Kabat-Zinn breath is "... the rhythm of the primordial sea internalized, the ebb and flow of matter and energy. In focusing on the breath when we meditate, we are learning right from the start to get comfortable with change ... to train ourselves to attend to a process that not only cycles and flows but that also responds to our emotional state by changing its rhythms, sometimes quite dramatically."

The breath is the bridge between the body and the mind, helping us to get in touch with our centre of gravity, below the head, beneath the turmoil of the thinking mind, to activate the intuitive, experiential centres of our being. Breath watching can be practiced anytime, anywhere, and checking in with the breath several times a day provides us with a barometer of our emotional state.

In follow-up surveys conducted by the Stress Clinic, graduates rate awareness of breath as the most significant factor in their improvement.

Integrally connected to meditation and breathwatching are the practices of body scan and yoga. Kabat-Zinn believes that, to a great extent, our society is obsessed with body image, a media-fed cult of youth and beauty. As a consequence we have become disconnected from our bodies, hung up on externals. Body scan and yoga help participants in the Stress Clinic get back in touch with their inner selves, observing their bodies area by area, uncovering and literally breathing and stretching away pockets of fatigue, tension, dullness, pain, etc. The result: a return to wholeness rather than fragmentation; a wholeness, an interconnectedness of body and mind and, by extension, an interconnectedness to all living things.

Linda, a participant in the Stress Clinic, originally likened her mind to a truck, always right behind her, pushing, driving her, allowing her no rest, no peace.

We need to be reminded, Kabat-Zinn says, that we are human be-ings, not human do-ings. It is easy to become caught up in the frenetic pace of modern life, preoccupied with busy-ness, driving ourselves beyond our limits, until our bodies break down under the stress. We need to introduce a note of simplicity in our lives, to get off the treadmill, pruning unnecessary, busy-making things, and concentrate on the truly important.

## **Book Review** cont'd

Kabat-Zinn maintains that "our beliefs and attitudes, our thoughts and emotions, ... have a major influence on our health"; that healing "...always involves an attitudinal and emotional transformation... the possibility for us to relate differently to illness, disability, even death as we learn to see with eyes of wholeness."

Thought patterns for example, an optimistic or pessimistic life view, can make one more or less susceptible to disease, as can other attributes like "stress hardiness" or possessing a sense of coherence in our lives.

"There is mounting evidence," says Kabat-Zinn, "that certain psychological and behavior patterns may predispose a person to at least some forms of cancer, while other personality attributes may protect a person from cancer or increase the chances of surviving it."

However, it is incorrect to infer that a causal relationship has been found between certain personality traits or behaviors and cancer, that being or thinking a certain way causes illness. It is perhaps one factor in a constellation of other factors. Not all who smoke cigarettes will develop lung cancer, but a strong statistical link exists between the disease and the behavior.

It is also important to distinguish between healing and being cured, the absence of disease. Healing is a transformation of view, a recognition of one's intrinsic wholeness and connectedness to everything else. Above all, healing involves coming to feel at peace with oneself.

Full Catastrophe Living is a storehouse of wisdom and practical advice for transforming body, mind and spirit. I have read and re-read my copy, and continue to derive inspiration in its pages.

### ***Spring 2004 Sangha Survey- You Said It!***

1. *Are you satisfied with the current roster of social events?*      **85% YES** / 8% NO (7% No comment)
2. *Which social events do you attend?*

Vesak	23%
Celebration of Giving	38%
Summer Picnic	46%
Sunday Brunch	23%
Movie Nights	46%
3. *Are you satisfied with the new King St. location?*      **100% YES** / 0% NO
4. *How important is the central location of the new centre to your attendance?*  
38% IMPORTANT / **62% NOT IMPORTANT**



## *Sangha Survey* cont'd

5. *Suggested changes to King St. location, selected comments:*

- Too hot in summer- need better air conditioning
- Too cold in winter- need better heat
- Need bigger venue
- Need more space for books/magazines
- Turn off space heaters/fans during meditation.

6. *Other notable comments from the Sangha:*



- Would like more information about traditional Buddhist holidays
- A natural setting is important
- The sense of sacred space at King St. is growing.
- More movie nights are needed
- Social events need to be more child/parent friendly
- Foster more regular interaction within meditation classes- ie- tea after class
- Nurturing a sense of community is very important, but it is also important to do so without creating unnecessary busy-ness (ie- too many e-mails, etc.)
- The Centre is doing a great job at organizing retreats at affordable prices
- The Dharma Centre should organize a sports team of some kind as a fun community building activity.

## *Dharma Centre Financial Report*

*Larry Dickhout, Treasurer*

In this issue of the newsletter, we are trying a new format for the Centre's financial reporting. Instead of just an income statement, we are trying to communicate our financials in a way that is easier to understand. We've done this by summarizing information into graphs and tables that will hopefully give you a better of where money is coming from at the moment (revenues), where it's going (expenses), the state of our bank account (revenues minus expenses), and how things are relative to previous years. The income statement is also included for the period this year from January to the end of May.

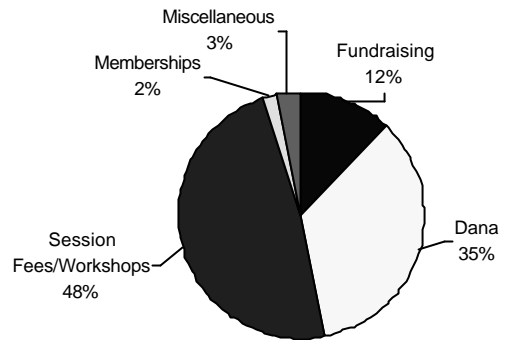
Our expenses are remarkably consistent year after year thereby indicating we have a good control of our expenses. On the revenue side our total revenues are down from last year. On a positive note, congratulations to the membership for their generosity in contributing dana, as dana contributions are up this year compared to last year.. Session fees and workshop revenues are down significantly this year, thereby resulting in expenses exceeding revenues for the year to date (July 31, 2004) resulting in depleting much of our cash reserve. On a positive note we will not have to borrow money this year (unlike last year) to get us over the summer when our revenues are generally small.



# Financial Report cont'd

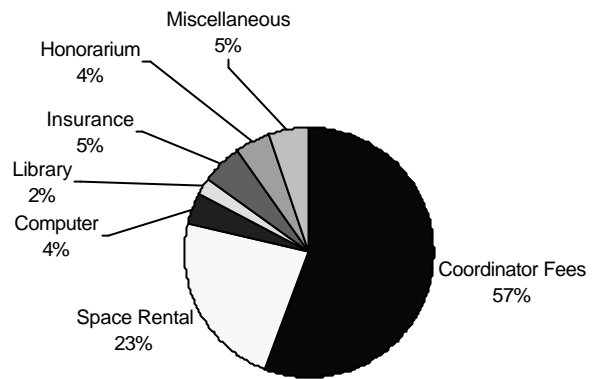
## Where is Money Coming From?

Source of Revenues	July-04 Revenue
Fundraising	\$1,590
Dana	4,711
Session Fees/Workshops	6,488
Memberships	300
Miscellaneous	381



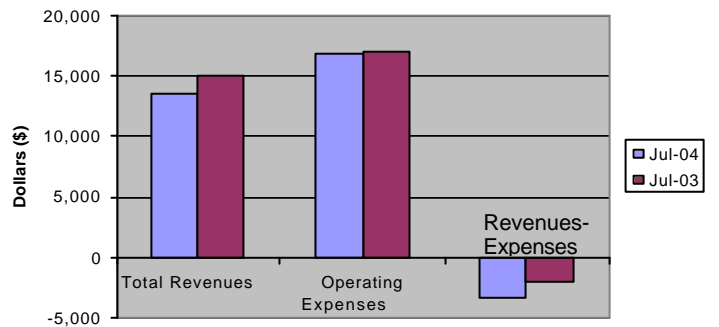
## Where is Money Being Spent?

Type of Expense	July-04 Expenses
Coordinator Fees	\$8,750
Space Rental	\$3,500
Computer	\$733
Library	\$292
Insurance	\$756
Honorarium	\$670
Miscellaneous	\$950



## How Do We Look Relative to the Same Time Last Year (July/03 vs. July/04)

	Jul-04	Jul-03
Total Revenues	13,470	15,028
Operating Expenses	16,886	16,925
Revenues-Expenses	-3,356	-1,897



**Financial Report** cont'd**Income Statement**

January 1-May 31, 2004.

**Income**

Bank Interest	1.24
Dana	3,850.90
Fundraising	1,444.17
Memberships	190.00
Session Fees	6,038.50
Other	281.80
	-----
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>11,814.61</b>

**Expenses**

Bank Charge	5.00
Co-Ordinator's Fee	6,250.00
Fundraising Expenses	50.00
Furniture and Fixtures	571.16
Gifts Given	29.67
Groceries	19.77
GST Expenses	64.10
Honorarium	260.00
Insurance	756.00
Library	241.26
Maintenance & Repair	87.21
Office Expenses	193.62
Plants & Incense	40.92
Retreat Expenses	65.00
Software	55.37
Space Rental	2,500.00
Telephone	242.37
Other	245.27
	-----
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>11,650.72</b>

<b>Difference</b>	<b>163.89</b>
-------------------	---------------



Waterloo Riverview Dharma Centre was founded in 1999 as a not-for profit, non-sectarian centre for meditative practice in the Buddhist tradition. WRDC offers weekly meditation groups, beginner's courses workshops, retreats, evening and Sunday sittings, visiting Dharma teachers, resource library. The Centre is located at 186 King Street South in Waterloo, Ontario. For more information phone 519-578-8480, or e-mail [info@wrdharmacentre.com](mailto:info@wrdharmacentre.com).