



# Great Tree Zen Temple

## newsletter - fall - 2008

### A One Month Internship at Great Tree Zen Temple:

*“When the Student is ready the Teacher will appear”*

*by Jan Howard*

*Kind words can be short  
and easy to speak, but  
their echoes are truly  
endless.*

—Mother Teresa

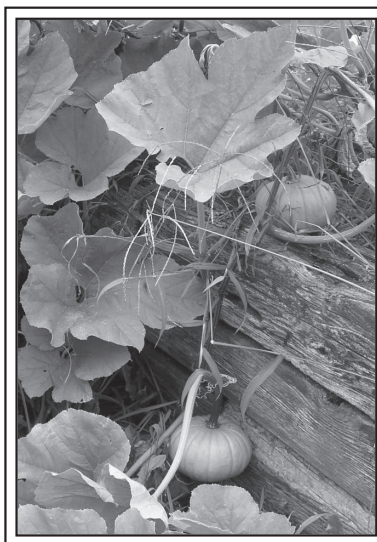
I first met Rev. Teijo Munnich in Savannah, GA in September of 2004 and our paths crossed again in 2006 and 2007. All occasions took place at meditation retreats sponsored through Great Tree Zen Temple. Numerous personal challenges surfaced subsequent to the 2007 meditation retreat and I sought refuge in the Great Tree sangha via their website. I began to sit zazen regularly four to five days per week in the mornings. The intuitive messages, I continually received, were calling me to experience “refuge in the sangha” by travelling to Great Tree. As with all things, timing is everything and the first effort I mustered to attend an event was met with a big Stop sign. Shortly after this I was perusing the website and happened upon the opportunity for a month long internship. This was the beckoning voice I was being asked to answer with action and commitment. The voice came again in an early morning meditation and said, “Commit to a month of community, learning, and service.” I felt a sense of peace and relief, which for me is an indication that I am in alignment with what is being asked. This experience reminded me of an excerpt from one of Katagiri Roshi’s books where (this is my interpretation) he referenced, “the little chick in the shell tapping”, is the student calling and the teacher / guide answering. I tapped and Great Tree and Teijo answered!

Short of my experience within the arena of medicine regarding internship, I was not quite sure what an internship at Great Tree Zen Temple meant. When I interviewed with Teijo for the internship I had said, “I had no idea of what it would or would not be.” However, when I arrived at Great Tree I did have expectations. Isn’t that so human! This humanness propelled me into a community of schedule, order, and a culture that was foreign, and initially profoundly uncomfortable. Living, breathing, and co-existing in a Zen Buddhist community were not part of my life experiences. Short of weekend retreats, solo practice, study, and a deep desire to be part of a spiritual community, I had no experience with this way of life. That being said, I plunged head first into a sea of newness, a sea of living in the moment, and a sea of new experiences.

The day I arrived was the eve of a workshop for young women. My primary responsibility was to prepare lunch for this gathering. No problem, cooking was a joy for me. However, I had not cooked in this fashion before—macrobiotic, ingredients that were foreign and a kitchen that had its own rhythm. Adapt and be in the flow was what was being asked and through support of the workshop participants that is exactly what took place. On the heels of this event was a children’s retreat and a family weekend. Should you find yourself at Great Tree during Children’s Retreat consider yourself fortunate. Surprises are sure to meet you! Family weekend over the 4th of July was a gift. The profound presence of parents was a sight to behold. All families brought food and found their way to residence whether it was by camping in tents on Great Tree’s property or utilizing the cabin and rooms available. We shared in a ‘family dinner,’ a ‘sangha dinner,’ which means all available prepared, cooked, ate together, and cleaned the kitchen. A welcome respite from the family dinners where some cooked, all partook, and a few cleaned up after everyone. The Great Tree sangha is a compassionate, present, yet unobtrusive presence facilitating the Way and the Practice in everyday affairs and interactions.

Living in the environment of Great Tree and upon the land removes one from the everyday. You have the opportunity to awaken and say yes to a way of being that is congruent with and in alignment with your essence, your blueprint for this life. It introduces and removes distractions of self, world, and

external matters which color one’s perceptions. Living at Great Tree Zen Temple was not easy and, more times than not, it was profoundly challenging. Perceptions color our experiences. Upon arriving home my perceptions had changed. Savannah had a different hue of green, home had a different energetic, and I was not the same person (or was I?). Nothing looked or felt as I had remembered a month earlier. I was profoundly touched by the reality of impermanence upon returning home. Within three hours of returning home, one of my canine companions, Sydney, died in my arms. Three days later his brother Norman followed. They were sixteen and seventeen, honorable



## GREAT TREE

### Abess:

Rev Teijo Munnich

### Board Members:

Anna Matheson  
David Hildebrand  
Erin Rafalowski  
Jonathon Flaum  
Marijo Simpson  
Ruthanne Kah

### Temple Administrators:

*Kansu:*  
Susan Hales

*Fusu:*  
David Hoki Stack

*Ino:*  
Rev Chimyo Atkinson



Great Tree Zen Temple  
679 Lower Flat Creek Rd  
Alexander, NC 28701

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*“We say that one’s work is ‘Zen in the middle of movement’ while sitting quietly in zazen is ‘Zen in the middle of quiet.’ If you can mesh and harmonize these two aspects of Zen, for certain you will make great progress both in your work and in your zazen.”* –Harada Sekkei Roshi

Perhaps the question I hear most often is, “How can I apply my spiritual practice in my everyday life?” I think the basis of this question comes from our recognition of those times when we experience a struggle between our wish to behave compassionately and our inability to do so. Compassionate actions are those that come from understanding rather than judgment, actions and words that create a feeling of wellbeing because of our need to not feel alone. So the question is how can we apply our wish to be compassionate to situations which come up in our daily life?

The answer is, of course, quite simple: just treat everyone with thoughtfulness and kindness. Recently we had a Compassionate Communications Workshop which addressed the way we speak to each other and about each other. It involves taking responsibility for how we feel and recognizing the need that has or has not been fulfilled that causes a certain feeling. This effort also includes trying to understand the feeling and needs of others that may be causing them to act in a certain manner. To process in this way is very powerful. Being aware of underlying reasons for particular behavior diffuses false perceptions and judgments that often give rise to hurt and anger.

But the dilemma we face is that we forget. Situations sometimes bring forth reactions based on misreadings of the situation. And more often than not these reactions are ones we’ve had before, patterns of behavior that we’ve been subject to for so long that we aren’t even sure where they are

coming from, much less how to keep ourselves from engaging in them again.

Several years ago I met a Korean monk at Hosshinji monastery who made a calligraphy for me which says, “Movement in Stillness, Stillness in Movement.” As I reflect on the question of how to bring our spiritual awareness to our everyday interactions, I keep returning to the importance of zazen, sitting meditation. Even when we sit quietly on the cushion there is never complete stillness in our body or mind. And even when we are moving about in our everyday life there is a stillness which can be accessed. Difficulties come when we lose touch with the movement within stillness and stillness within movement. If we believe there is no movement when we meditate, we mentally separate our everyday life in which there is physical and mental movement and our zazen life in which we are presumably not moving. If we believe that everyday life is different from the stillness we experience in meditation, we create the same kind of distinction, thinking that zazen is a state of being immovable in contrast to everyday life which is a state of movement. If we differentiate in this way we become kind of schizophrenic. In our minds we separate ourselves into two different people. But actually we are both movement and stillness all the time, there is a natural balance within us. It is only our perceptions that makes it difficult for us to see these as mutually exclusive. When we recognize the relationship between movement and stillness it is possible to see when and how they work together in our lives to create balance.



*Stillness Within Movement*

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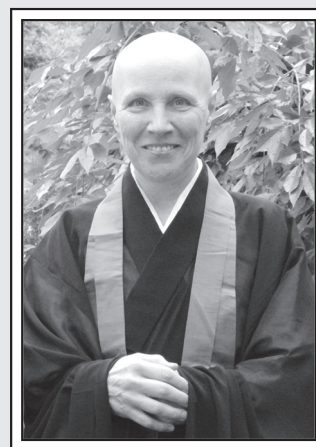
**A One Month Internship at Great Tree Zen Temple –continued from page 1**

ages for two feisty pups that had traveled many of life’s valleys and mountain peaks steadfastly by my side. They embodied a life that had past, a present that was transforming, and a future yet to be experienced. I awakened to a wholeness that I had not known prior to being at Great Tree. Had it not been for this re-found awareness of my place in the Universe I do not believe that the sense of peace that pervades my life today would be present.

We never stray far from our original intention; rather we seek that which re-unites us with the path—the Way. Impermanence permeates every

breath we take, every illusion, and every truth. That being said—I encourage you to say yes if you are intuitively guided to Great Tree Zen Temple, say yes if you have a desire to deepen your practice, say yes and come experience an internship, a workshop, a day of mindfulness, or a practice period. Simply say yes and allow zazen to do the rest.

Gassho to Teijo and all the individuals who touched and enriched my life while at Great Tree during this internship and in the present moment.



We would like to remind all of you that Rev. Munnich provides us with the gift of her teaching. In turn, she lives by our gifts, which are always appreciated.



Garrett Ruley

**Family meditation** by Garrett Ruley

Every month at the Great Tree Zen temple, there is a Family Meditation. This is where all the members of the families who practice at Great Tree can come and meditate. All ages—from babies to toddlers to grandmothers.

After everyone arrives, we all go to the Zendo, or mediation hall. We assign a bell ringer, incense lighter, and candle lighter, then we all sit down. All of us love to have an assigned duty. The incense reminds us of where we are. Then the Bell ringer rings the bell three times, and we meditate for five minutes. The silence is quite nice. Sometimes the babies interrupt it, but Teijo is totally cool with that.

Then there is a story, a Buddhist tale. My favorite part is after the story we act it out. Teijo assigns parts, and we learn our lines quickly. Then Teijo reads the story again, with the children and sometimes the adults acting out the parts. We all laugh a lot. We have gotten this play thing down so well, that we got to act out Weesak this year.

To close, we meditate for one more minute, and then we snuff the incense and candles. We then disperse to the main room where food is set out and conversation begins. The food is delicious and varied. Sometimes we play Go. Go is a game that is kind of like souped up checkers. Teijo is an expert. There are usually jobs that can be done to help out.. Folding newsletters, tending the garden, and cooking are just a few. Once we made paper cranes for someone who was ill. A thousand were made by Great Tree Buddhists.

Then we all leave. Goodbyes are said, and everyone packs up and drives away to return next month. Mark your calendars Family Meditation Opportunities!

After that, we chant, or perform ceremonies that are connected to recent events. For example, when Daisy died, we read and chanted from *The Tibetan Book of The Dead*. Often we will go around the room and tell what has been significant in our lives' recently. Usually someone relates funny stories. Last time, there were bats and bees involved.



**Great Tree Monk**

by Charlalee Sedgwick

The dog meditated on the woman who meditated on the wall in front of her that cold day in the moun-

tains of North Carolina. The woman sat ponderous as a mountain, meditating on the board and mortar of the wall not two feet from her face. I sat catty-corner to her, but instead of the wall, I was absorbed in watching the two of them.

It was early, and it was dark outside the bare but elegant zendo. The warm light in the corner barely lit the scene, half-glancing off the side of the woman's head and falling full on the face of her dog, whose nose was no more than a foot away from hers. They were a pair, dignified beings, the dog's head and the woman's cheek. He seemed puzzled but plaintive, his nose pointing up at her

cheek. He was a white dog, short body shaped like a sausage, small eyes peering down a long nose, and I could tell, out of the corner of my eye, that there wasn't much play in him. He seemed serious, even outside on the lawn, not eager to run around or leap like other dogs, not even curious about his surrounds, but more content, like his mistress, to just sit quietly and consider things.

The woman was like a statue, someone made out of sand on the beach, but unlike sand, permanent. Upstairs in the common room with busy light-hearted people moving around, I felt intimidated by her stolid presence in the corner. She said little and her face was impassive. Her way of seeming like the eye of the storm made her interesting to me and secretly I felt challenged to make her smile before the weekend was over.

In the zendo, where the quiet and formal room matched the sobriety of her spirit, she sat in an honored spot, by a highly decorated bell that she was in charge of ringing. It had a sound that would wrap me up, setting my inner world aright every time she rang it. Sutra books lay by her side, and she had her own private Buddha smiling at her from a cushion she'd given it. That morning, sandwiched between dog and Buddha, she was



the one who began the chants and the one to ring the sitting to a close. She sat like that mountain in the Buddhist myth that sits for eons, as mountains truly do, changing only ever so slightly when a pigeon flies over its peak with a cloth in its mouth, wiping the mountain's top every thousand years or so, taking a little bit of mountain with it. Throughout meditation I continued to steal glances at her, reassured by her, knowing she'd pick up that bell stick and ring us all to a tone-perfect close.

# Registration for Great Tree Events

Great Tree requests a deposit of 1/2 the registration fee. Make checks payable to Great Tree Zen Temple. Mail to our address, attention Registration Coordinator. If you need to cancel and do so 7 days before the event, all but a \$25 processing fee will be reimbursed. If Great Tree cancels an event you will be completely reimbursed. Contact information is to the right.

## Great Tree Zen Temple

679 Lower Flat Creek Rd, Alexander NC 28701

828 645-2085 info@greattreetemple.org

DATES TO ATTEND: \_\_\_\_\_

Diet / Allergies: \_\_\_\_\_

EVENT NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Sleeping:  Mattress  Futon  Anything  Camp  Commute

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Emergency Contact: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (s): \_\_\_\_\_

Their Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Physician / Phone / Insurance etc. if applicable: \_\_\_\_\_

Full Fee or  Deposit enclosed:

## Practice Opportunities at Great Tree *Everyone welcome!*

*Practice periods are opportunities to strengthen meditation practice and become more mindful in daily life. The daily schedule includes meditation, study, and communal work. This is an opportunity to become familiar with the style of practice we do at Great Tree and experience Sangha.*

### Tuesday Discussion Group

- Tuesdays 3:30 pm–5:00 pm

Ends December 16, 2008

(No meeting December 2 because of Sesshin)

Begins again February 10 through July 28, 2009

Resumes September 22 through December 15

### Weekly zazen for everyone:

- Tuesday & Thursday evenings 7–8:30 pm

Zazen for everyone during Practice Periods:

T, W, Th mornings 6 a.m. – 7:30 a.m.

### Family Practice

- Sundays 10:30 AM – Noon

Includes a short period of meditation and Dharma teaching. May include a play, or other activity related to topic. Parents, children, and all others interested are welcome to attend.

Dates: January 18, February 22, March 22, April 26, May 31, June 21, July 26

### Days of Mindfulness

Calm, relax - body and mind - in order to nourish, to heal - to transform all habit energies.

Dates: March 14, April 11, May 9, June 13, July 11

### Practice Days:

An informal practice day: includes zazen, Dharma talk, and informal tea in the morning, lunch and mindful work. Join Practice Days either with morning zazen, service and breakfast beginning at 6:00 am or after breakfast at 9:30. Dates: April 25, May 16, June 20, July 25

## Classes – Beginning and Experienced Practitioners Welcome

**Intro Series** January 29, February 5, February 12  
Awakening to Zen: An Introduction to Zen Practice

- The Undoing of Doing
- Every Step of the Path is Awakening
- Every-minute Zen

**Young Women's Zen "Living the Questions" Series:**  
10 a.m. – 4 p.m. Saturdays, January 24, February 21, March 21

- The Question is the Answer"
- The Magic of Patience
- The Finger Pointing at the Moon

**Spring Class Series** April 16, April 23, April 30  
"How to Taste a Strawberry When the Tiger is Chasing You"

- In spiritual practice
- In relationships
- In times of scarcity

## Upcoming Sesshins

### 2008

December 1-7

**New Year's Sesshin:**

December 31-January 3

### 2009

**Practice Periods for Residents and Non-Residents**

March 25- June 13

June 25 – August 9

### 2009

**Nehan Sesshin:** February 13-15

April 3-8

May 1-6

June 5-12

**At Great Tree, sesshins (Buddhist retreats) are, as much as possible, silent.**

Men and women are both invited to attend and stay at the temple for the duration of a retreat. Sesshins consist of zazen (sitting meditation), kinhin (walking meditation), work periods, and oryoki meals. Participants are expected to share cooking and cleaning up duties. Sesshins begin at 7:00 pm the first night with a light supper and end at noon the last day. If you can only attend part of a sesshin, you are still welcome. Please let us know the dates you will attend on the registration form. We ask, as much as possible, that people all start the sesshin together.

### Cost:

3 nights \$100 for members, \$120 for non-members

5 nights \$220 for members, \$260 for non-members

7 nights \$260 for members, \$300 for non-members

We ask you bring your own sheets, blankets, pillows, towels, toiletries, and other necessities. We do not wear shoes in the temple, so please bring indoor slippers if you need them. Also, please bring clothes and shoes for work period. If you are a sensitive sleeper, please bring earplugs, as accommodations are dormitory style.

## CHANGES AND BOARD NEWS

During the summer, two of our board members, Rev. Kyoki Roberts and Foster de la Houssaye completed their terms of office as Board Members and elected not to renew their positions of the board. We are grateful for their valued service to Great Tree and wish them well in their endeavors.

In addition, the Board also would like to acknowledge Maria Joku Domoto who resigned from her responsibilities as Financial Administrator, Communications Coordinator and member of the Development Committee. Maria has played a critical role in the growth of Great Tree for over four years and served a term on the Board of Directors. It was Maria who found the property, now home of Great Tree Zen Temple, here in Alexander. Her important and subsequent oversight was important to making the vision of Great Tree possible. Additionally, Maria created and implemented the website, newsletter, and email updates. She put in place much of the administrative and operational structure that will continue to support Great Tree in the future. As a liaison to the Board of Directors she provided valued service to the Board to help make Great Tree a reality. We appreciate her considerable effort, dedication and contribution to the founding of Great Tree.

Joining us this fall as new Board Members, are, Marijo Simpson and Erin Rafalowski. We look forward to working with them to continue and deepen the short and long term planning we began last year. We welcome them to the Board.

New to the board last year, Anna Mathesson will be taking on the position of Volunteer Coordinator, to help match Great Tree's human resource needs with sangha members. Please watch the web site for updates about work-practice opportunities and consider serving in some way to support Great Tree. Volunteers are the foundation for the ongoing success and a way to deepen your practice. From work in the garden and grounds to bookkeeping, cleaning, help with mailings, chopping wood or service as a Board Member, and more... all support is welcome.

After some trial and error we have worked out the kinks is the new computer at Great Tree and you can expect administrative email from grtree.office@verizon.net, a new feature that we hope will improve the communication flow.

If you would like to know more about Great Tree events or opportunities, the contact address for

our website [www.greattreetemple.org](http://www.greattreetemple.org) where you can find information about practice opportunities, our calendar of events and general information about Great Tree.

## New Board Members

Erin works with the WriteMind Institute for Corporate Contemplation, a consultancy that facilitates leadership journeys and authentic communication in business, believing work should be approached as a refuge for people's development. Her interests include cooking, travel, and recreating in nature; she also volunteers through Big Brothers Big Sisters. She hopes to support young women's interest in spiritual practice through serving Great Tree. In 2006 Erin moved to Asheville, NC from Ithaca, NY. She credits Ithaca for teaching her what it means to be part of a community.



**Erin Rafalowski**

Marijo Simpson has been active in the Buddhist community since moving to Asheville in 1989. She, David Hildebrand and Sarah Lashlee hosted the Tibetan monks in 1992 when they came to create the Healing Mandala at Pack Place and perform Sacred Music, Sacred Dance at Lipensky auditorium. She also worked with Teijo to start the family meditation group and the recent Great Tree t-shirt. She looks forward to working on the board and becoming more involved in the development of Great Tree.



**Marijo Simpson**

Consider this leaf.  
In a matter of months  
life has cooked it from tender green  
to a crisp bronze.  
In that short span  
it has fed this tree, the atmosphere,  
my eyes,  
only to end up at the end  
of my rake,  
mulch for next season's flowers.  
I cannot say that I have spent my time  
as well.

–Chimyo 11/2/01

## GREAT TREE SCHEDULE

See website for updates and details

### NEW YEAR'S EVE 2008

**Practice Day:** Dec 31 - 9 am to 3:30 pm

**Ring in the New Year 7 pm:** Zazen, chanting & ringing the bell until midnight.

### RETREAT SCHEDULE

**Mother and Child Retreat** led by Rev Teijo Munnich: February 6 – 8

**Women's Retreat** led by Rev Nancy Spence and Rev Teijo Munnich: Feb 28 – Mar 1

**Beginning Again Intro Retreat** led by Judith Toy: March 27 – 29b

**Children's Retreat** led by Rev Teijo Munnich: June 16 - 18

**Calligraphy Retreat** led by Rev Eiko Kichung Lizee: June 26-28

**Family Practice Weekend** led by Rev Teijo Munnich: July 3 – 5

**Way of the Bodhisattva** led by Rev Nancy Spence July 16-19

**A Zen Writing Workshop** led by Peggy Tabor Millin: August 7 - 9

### TEIJO'S TRAVELS

**Zen Center of Asheville lectures:**

2008: November 19; December 10

2009: January 21, 28; February 11, 25; March 11, 25; April 15, 29; May 13, 27; June 3, 24;

July 8, 22; August 5 **Contact:** 828-398-4212

[contact@zcasheville.org](mailto:contact@zcasheville.org)

**Knoxville Interfaith Meditation Group:**

November 22, Spring & Summer TBA

**Contact:** Barbara Roberts 865 680-0887  
[broberts@tombras.com](mailto:broberts@tombras.com)

**Seagrove Beach FL:** January 9 – 14

**Contact:** Nancy Ann James 850 231-1498  
[nancyjames@embarqmail.com](mailto:nancyjames@embarqmail.com)

**Huntsville AL:**

Green Mountain Zen Center: April 17 – 18

**Contact** Jim Gordon [jag290@comcast.net](mailto:jag290@comcast.net)

**Atlanta GA:** Atlanta Soto Zen Center:

April 19 **Contact:** 404-532-0040

**Savannah GA:** May 15 – 17 **Contact:** Susan

Lamb [SBLamb@aol.com](mailto:SBLamb@aol.com) 912 232-4065

**Hot Springs NC:** Southern Dharma Retreat

Center: May 22-25 **Contact:** 828 622-7112  
[southerndharma@earthlink.net](mailto:southerndharma@earthlink.net)

**Charlotte Zen Meditation Society TBA**

**Contact:** Cheryl Drake-Bowers 704 821-8184  
[aybeecee@windstream.net](mailto:aybeecee@windstream.net)

# Buddha's Enlightenment Celebration & Holiday Crafts Sale

Sunday, December 7 3:30-6:30 PM

*Don't miss the party of the year—our annual holiday gathering! We'll start with a short, family-friendly period of zazen and a brief ceremony, then get down to serious celebrating, including music, food, and—back by popular demand—a craft and gift sale, featuring everything from Great Tree t-shirts and calendars to handmade artwork. **What to bring:***

- A potluck dish to share
- Words to sing-a-longs you like (in the past, we've joined together in everything from rounds and chants to traditional carols)
- Instruments (recent celebrations have featured drumming groups and a young violinist)

If you'd like to contribute items to the sale, please contact Marijo Simpson [mjsimpson@charter.net](mailto:mjsimpson@charter.net) 828 775-9704) by December 3rd. We're grateful to all the quilters, potters, photographers, calligraphers, painters, and other talented members of our community who have donated items in the past. All proceeds benefit Great Tree.



## Help Us Grow!

If you would like to make a donation, volunteer, register for an event, or get information, please contact us at:

**Great Tree Zen Temple**  
679 Lower Flat Creek Rd  
Alexander, NC 28701

828-645-2085  
[info@greattreetemple.org](mailto:info@greattreetemple.org)  
[www.greattreetemple.org](http://www.greattreetemple.org)

Your support is greatly appreciated. Without you, Great Tree would not have become a reality!

Great Tree Zen Temple  
679 Lower Flat Creek Rd  
Alexander, NC 28701

If you wish to be excluded from future mailings please let us know by emailing us at:  
[grtree.office@verizon.net](mailto:grtree.office@verizon.net)  
or: [info@greattreetemple.org](mailto:info@greattreetemple.org)

Or write us at the above address.

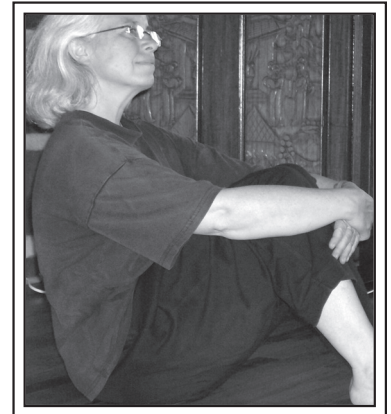
## Listening

by Erin Rafalowski

How often do you open communication with someone by really listening...and striving, not to analyze, but to understand the other person's feelings and needs?

The weekend Compassionate Communications workshop, held September 12-14, drew a balance of connecting regular Great Tree visitors to less frequent and even first-timers.

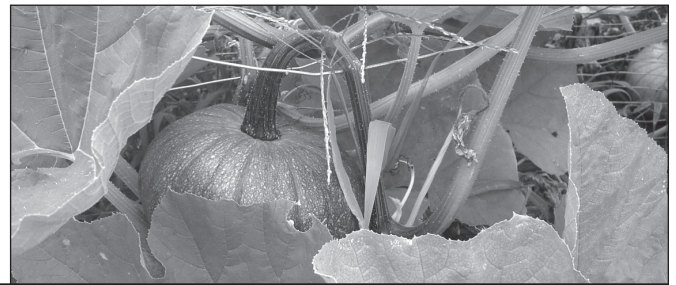
*participating in  
compassionate  
communication*



Alison Lee

Jerry Donoghue, communications coach and founder of Asheville Compassionate Communications Center, bases much of his methodology on the Marshall Rosenberg book *Non-Violent Communication: A Language of Life*. Jerry successfully emphasized the importance of the intention in participating in compassionate communication rather than focusing on the exact language and phrasing. Overall, participants had a refreshing opportunity to discuss communication through understanding one's own feelings and needs, then striving to understand the other's feelings and needs. Participants expressed feeling empowered after having the opportunity to practice these techniques through role playing and sharing real-life examples in the safe and trusting environment of Great Tree.

Thank you to Jerry Donoghue and board member Anna Matheson for making this insightful weekend possible.



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