

IMCW All Sangha Gathering A Huge Success!

by Darlene Nipper

Over one hundred people attended the 2008 All Sangha Meeting held on March 7 at American University's Tenley Campus. There were people from each of the sanghas and from areas as far away as Baltimore and southern Virginia (more than two hours away). The All Sangha Meeting was a representative gathering of the numerous IMCW sanghas that meet throughout the Washington region.

People learned about IMCW's ambitious plan to meet the growing demand for offering insight meditation in and around the nation's capital. Numerous ideas were shared. People spoke of how IMCW has served them personally and explored ways that they can serve the IMCW community. There was an enormous amount of creative energy and open-heartedness shared by all.

So many of you give of your generous hearts in many different ways. Sixty-three of you completed Next Incarnation volunteer forms at the All Sangha and forty-five of you indicated that you are ready to start serving the organization today!

Here are some highlights of what you told us that day:

How can IMCW better serve me?

- Have classes and retreats geared toward people at different stages of development
- Create more clear ways to plug into sangha, to gather with each other
- Consciously engage families and people at all stages of the life cycle especially families with young children, youth and the aging
- Find ways to collect and process feedback on classes and teachers
- Increase marketing, communications and community outreach
- Improve the website and better utilize technology to help us get and stay connected with each other (e.g. blogs, web casting, Facebook, etc.)
- Increase diversity in the leadership and build more inclusive sanghas
- Establish mentoring and other ways of deepening sitting practice
- More of and increased exposure for Off-the-Cushion activities
- Organize volunteers

How would I like to serve the Sangha?

- Retreats & Daylongs
- Board committees
- Care committee
- Internet and technology advancement
- Fundraising events

Other Activities that you wrote in on the form:

- Mentoring
- Outreach to underserved communities
- Marketing, communications & PR

With the All Sangha meeting as its springboard, the IMCW Board has adopted a number of key areas of focus for the next twelve months:

Community Building

- Develop a new board committee focused in this area
- Implement a formal volunteer program
- Initiate a new Care Committee

Diversity & Inclusion

- Develop a new board committee focused in this area
- Initiate training for board and IMCW leadership around issues of diversity and inclusion
- Organize Nonviolent Communication training for teachers, board and staff
- Develop new policies to increase participation of people from diverse backgrounds in IMCW retreats

Fundraising

- Reinvigorate fundraising committee
- Initiate fundraising events
- Develop the Sustainers Program

Other Immediate Areas of Focus:

- Improve website and start technology group
- Continue to explore "Home of Our Own"
- Institute a developmental curriculum
- Increase IMCW involvement in Engaged Buddhism and related activities
- Improve organization communication (more information re: Off the Cushion, other materials and vehicles)

I extend sincere gratitude and appreciation to all involved. Not only did your energy, wisdom and open-heartedness enable us to have a successful All Sangha Meeting, these qualities are the anchors for true community building each day. Let's continue to come together across all sanghas to find ways to invoke this sense of community as we embark on this phase of our ***"Next Incarnation."***

I look forward to taking this journey with you.

Namaste,
Rev. Darlene Nipper
Executive Director, IMCW