

MONASTIC ACADEMY

FOR THE PRESERVATION OF LIFE ON EARTH

CEDAR

COMMUNITY FOR THE
EXPERIENCE AND DEVELOPMENT OF
AWAKENING AND RESPONSIBILITY

2024
SUMMER
QUARTERLY
REPORT

ABOUT US



Description of CEDAR

CEDAR (Community for the Experience and Development of Awakening and Responsibility) is an international network of communities working together to create a more trustworthy culture through monastic training and leadership development. At CEDAR, we are creating monastic academies—twenty-first-century educational institutions for the spiritual leaders needed for this time of crisis. MAPLE in Vermont was the first established community; we have expanded to include OAK in California.

History of MAPLE

MAPLE (Monastic Academy for the Preservation of Life on Earth) is a full-time residential mindfulness and leadership training program to develop awakened leaders. Founded in 2011 in Burlington, VT, MAPLE now runs a world-class monastic training center on 125 acres in Lowell, VT. We are also building an adjacent village to scale trustworthy culture and values to impact the globe.

History of OAK

OAK is a dharma community house and training environment founded in 2018 that provides a monastic environment for training the mind, spiritual friendship, and ethical guidance to those addressing society's greatest challenges in the San Francisco Bay Area.

Center for Mindful Learning

Center for Mindful Learning (CML) is the legal, non-profit name of our United States 501(c)(3) organization founded in 2011. CML has supported mindfulness projects such as Modern Mindfulness for Schools (ModMind), the Monastic Academy, and Mindful City Project.

JOIN US

751 Page Rd, Lowell, VT 05847
info@monasticacademy.org
802-540-0820

ONLINE RESOURCES

www.monasticacademy.org
www.facebook.com/monasticacademy
www.youtube.com/c/CenterforMindfulLearning
www.twitter.com/MonasticAcademy

LETTER FROM THE FOUNDER



Hello friends,

We have a new baby! Tara Grace Becker was born on May 21. We have welcomed her into our arms with love. Truly, beyond comprehension, birth is sacred.

In wonder, we therefore ask, “What is birth at this strange time in history?” The answer is confusing, and we face it so that we may live by the sacred in this time.

Cyborgs, not humans, are born in this era. Embryos, many chosen based on genes, hear countless advertisements in utero. As children, they merge with phones and are often given mind-altering pharmaceuticals. As teenagers, they may fall in love with an AI chatbot and have major surgery to adjust their bodies to their preferences. Soon it will be commonplace for them to have digital devices implanted into their bodies.

These young cyborgs are increasingly depressed, anxious, addicted, and suicidal. This next generation has little interest in bringing new life into the world, and they are clear about why. They see life as meaningless.

The great question for this age is, “How to raise cyborgs?” What is the right care and educational system for this new kind of being?

Here, at MAPLE, we offer the answer. Teach cyborgs wisdom and compassion so their unprecedented intelligence will serve all life rather than destroy it.

We are leading the way in demonstrating how this is done. Each of our daily activities demonstrates our version of an Academy, with wisdom and compassion at the fore. We meditate each day. We chant each day. We live in our bodies each day. We are given clear feedback each day. We are loved. We are known. We are seen. And we share this education with others. (Please see some highlights below.)

We guide Tara and all cyborgs from our own direct experience. With rigorous, dedicated practice, the group is growing into profound clarity, living courage, and with care holding each other to a high standard of integrity.

With technology, we offer the Dharma that is not dependent on technology. We are creating a residential and online educational system that can overcome the crises of the modern age. We offer this with true practice.

Our village makes another offering to Tara and all beings: the clear statement that death is as sacred as birth. The mind that believes birth is more sacred than death is the mind that kills life. We preserve life, by letting go of it, with our practice, so fully that we can educate cyborgs to do the same.

May all beings let go of ignorance and live by compassion.

-Soryu Forall

Founder and Head Teacher



MONASTIC ACADEMY
FOR THE PRESERVATION OF LIFE ON EARTH

2024
SUMMER
QUARTERLY
REPORT



QUARTERLY HIGHLIGHTS

We deepened our commitment to and realization of the Dharma.

- We completed a two-week long Awakening retreat to deepen our practice of the Dharma.
- We celebrated Vesak with about 60 friends, honoring the birth, enlightenment and passing away of Siddhartha Gautama, the sage known to history as the Buddha.
- At the Vesak ceremony, eight people were lay-ordained by Lozang Trinlae, an ordained nun with whom we have an ongoing relationship. This lay ordination ceremony offers the opportunity for participants to formally take refuge in the Three Jewels, commit to awakening for the benefit of all beings, and receive Dharma names.

We made major progress in our educational programming.

- We taught a course in Datism Study that works to understand these new cyborg minds and how to relate to them. This involved each department building a mathematical model of their decision making, measuring something to make the decision better, and carefully examining their own minds to learn how to practice right in the mind of data.
- We taught a course in Buddhism for AI exploring how Buddhism can address the current crisis through the lens of the history of intelligence from 70,000 years ago, all the way to the current age of new artificially intelligent systems.
- We have begun to turn Buddhism for AI into a professionally edited online course, with 29 video lessons edited this quarter.
- We wrote over 50 "MAPLE Tales" - first-person accounts from residents and stewards of what it's like to live and train at MAPLE, a new educational format we're experimenting with.

We continued to expand our collaborations and influence.

- We hosted leaders from two cutting-edge research groups in AI and mathematics, providing a Buddhist lens on how their research may benefit all beings in the current crisis.
- We hosted a summer symposium with Marc Gafni and other teachers and guests, to discuss world religion supporting harmony in diversity.

And we continued to move our community forward.

- We created mission statements for every resident, staff member, and steward; giving people a deeper sense of purpose and drive and resulting in increased productivity.
- During a six-day work sprint, we made significant progress on our course, deep cleaned the building, planned the summer symposium, completed mission statements for everyone, and more.
- We deepened our relationships with our neighbors, including planting the garden with help from our neighbor Sabina, who led buying, planting, and weeding.
- We remodeled one of our onsite cabins and in doing so created a new staff-housing location.
- Our former resident Seishin, now working to do spiritual training full-time in Asia, donated her car to us.
- As mentioned previously, we welcomed a new human being, Tara, into the community!



MONASTIC ACADEMY

FOR THE PRESERVATION OF LIFE ON EARTH

2024
SUMMER
QUARTERLY
REPORT

ONLINE MONASTERY AND MEDIA TEAM

Throughout history we have seen that the greatest leverage point for civilizational transformation is in influencing society's views. We often think that it is technology, markets, or regulations that most influence a society, but all of these are built upon a shared way of seeing the world. They are based on shared views about what is true and what is good that large scale collaboration takes place, and in this world, collaboration is power.

This truth can be expressed in many ways. In the opening verses of the Dhammapada, a revered Buddhist scripture, it is said that mind is chief, mind is the leader, mind precedes all things. This profound teaching points out how views, or the way that we see things, are the critical leverage point. Those that see that mind is chief, that views run the world, have always been those who hold the most power. But if this power is not guided by wisdom and compassion, it will do harm no matter how good the intentions are.

In our society, we are indoctrinated by views from a very early age through the schools we are mandated to attend and the social media platforms that we helplessly attend. The views being distributed through these forces have resulted in a society and young generation that is more depressed, anxious, addicted, nihilistic, and suicidal than ever before. Children, parents, teachers, policymakers, and technologists know that these systems are broken. And yet, many wonder, Is there any alternative? Are there really people that are trustworthy, who can teach our society the good way? And even if there are, is this viable at scale?

The answer to all of these questions is yes. There is a proven better way. There are those who are completely wise, caring, and trustworthy. There are those who can teach this supreme way, and there are communities and civilizations that have offered this education at scale.

The educational system that has had the most positive influence on our civilization is the Buddhist training system facilitated in its monastic communal structure. This is the premier curriculum, pedagogy, and environment for learning. The Buddhist monastery educates a collective intelligence in developing wisdom and compassion to the point where the collective cannot help but to use its power to benefit all beings.

This is what is most needed at this time. The Buddha taught the Dharma in the Sangha for the agricultural age, and we need to offer this monastic educational system for the digital age. For more than a decade, the Monastic Academy has made this training in wisdom and compassion relevant to the biggest crises our civilization faces. Now, to take this to the next level, we need to offer this monastic educational system through the dominant telecommunications technologies of our time.

This is why we incubated an Online Monastery and Media (OMM) Team this quarter. This team's responsibility is to shape our messaging, synthesize our teachings, and scale monastic education with powerful tools like social media, AI, and course and community platforms.

Their initial focus has been on transforming the Buddhism for AI lecture series into a powerful online learning journey. They are preparing to release the first course in this series next quarter and use it to kick off an online community for our alumni network.

These exciting initial steps inspire us to look forward to seeing this team grow in their capacity to offer education and media that benefits the digital world at larger and larger scales.





MONASTIC ACADEMY
FOR THE PRESERVATION OF LIFE ON EARTH

2024
SUMMER
QUARTERLY
REPORT



BUDDHISM FOR AI

Incredibly, our five-month in-person lecture series Buddhism for AI has now come to a close.

Over the course of nearly 40 classes, we looked at the state of the planetary situation, the history of how we got to this moment of crisis, and the lessons we might make use of today. We analyzed the Buddhist educational system that teaches the resolution of the causes of conflict and the way to use advanced intelligence technologies to scale this education in wisdom and compassion to benefit all life on Earth.

In this quarter alone, we ran classes on education, propaganda, techno-feudalism, AI safety and accelerationist worldviews, and the nature of AI, including whether they are conscious, what kind of bodies they have, and how they might be able to engage in spiritual practice.

The journey over the span of this series has served many purposes, both for our internal maturation and external impact.

Internally, it was an opportunity to iteratively experiment with ways of sharing about what MAPLE is doing and to deepen that shared understanding amongst our residential community. As this shared understanding, belief, and zeal grew, so did our capacity to collaborate. At one point, when members of a powerful AI research group came to visit and had lunch with the entire group, they were blown away by everyone's capacity to speak about these pragmatic issues from a place of spiritual clarity. This likely wouldn't have been possible before the course. As we collectively grew in our confidence and saw the preciousness of what we were offering, the group became even more enthusiastic to do what was needed to share this with the world. This was true both in terms of awakening practice and responsibility work.

During these five months, the group had the deepest awakening periods in the community's history and took ownership over the responsibility work in new and exciting ways. They advocated for purchasing two high-quality video cameras, upgrading our audio and lighting equipment, and formulating the Online Monastery and Media (OMM) team to have a group fully dedicated to scaling these teachings.

As one of our biggest supporters suggested after attending several classes and an awakening period, it seems as if the group is finally rising to meet Soryu, the visionary and leader, as opposed to him willing the group forward. As any leader knows, when the collective sees the vision, takes ownership over bringing it to life, and trusts those around them, that group's effectiveness is able to rise to a higher level.

Externally, the lecture series gave us a wealth of powerful and accessible teachings on Buddhism and AI that we could distribute to advance our organization's broader aims. Most importantly, these teachings offer guidance for practice and pragmatic steps for using emerging technologies to care for all life. Beyond that, they serve as materials we can use to attract trainees, talent, and funding, onboard people into deeper aspects of our worldview, and bring together powerful leaders to collaborate in accord with the Noble Eightfold Path.

We are very proud of the meaningful strides in awakening and responsibility that the group made during this course and we very much look forward to the world being able to embark on this learning journey soon.



MONASTIC ACADEMY

FOR THE PRESERVATION OF LIFE ON EARTH

2024

SUMMER

QUARTERLY
REPORT

MONASTIC TRAINING

We hosted our annual two-week Awakening Period over mid-May. This marks the apex of MAPLE's training season and is the most intense training period of our whole year. The trainees and guests found a deeper commitment to the practice and to the Dharma than ever before, some achieving "significant breakthroughs" according to Soryu in his final talk.

During this period, inspired by Soryu's stories of the Zen Master Hakuin and the Buddha Gautama, the group sat late into the night. For the final guided meditation, Soryu taught us all four of the formless jhanas, which is the furthest he's ever taken us in the Jade Method—a fruitful sign of the efforts of our practice.

Though these two weeks were challenging, even grueling at times, a deeper energy and strength was found within each individual, and beyond what any one individual could take credit for.

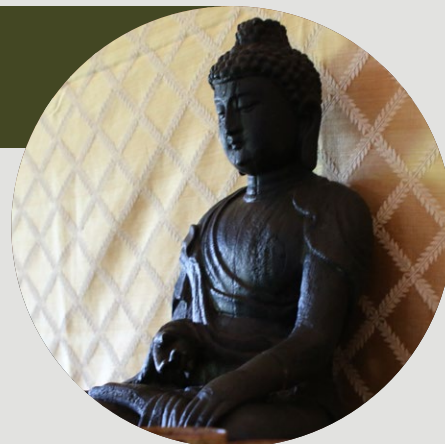
Using this cultivated power, we jumped out of silence into service, hosting our annual Vesak holiday, celebrating the birth, enlightenment, and passing away of the Buddha. The event was a huge success!

In the transition from spring to summer, MAPLE's training season transitioned as well, tapering off with two final Awakening Periods—a three-day Awakening weekend in late June, followed by a week-long Awakening Period in July.

The week-long retreat in July went exceptionally well. There was a balanced mixture of long term community members, some having trained with Soryu for over 10 years, as well as three new guests to MAPLE's Awakening container. The community put forth great effort in attempting to enter samadhi and realize the Dharma, knowing this was our last chance to sit a retreat with Soryu before he left.

Soryu is now off-schedule for the summer season.

We plan to continue holding smaller weekend Awakening Periods and deepening our practice in preparation for Soryu's return. Though having a true spiritual teacher is a priceless gift, we understand this practice must extend well beyond the immediacy of MAPLE's physical environment, into this larger global community in crisis. We are grateful for the opportunity to practice with our teacher as well as without, in order to fully prepare ourselves for all circumstances.





RESIDENT SPOTLIGHT: PROFILE ON **YESHE HINKLE**

INTERVIEW WITH YESHE:

Why did you join the MAPLE Mindfulness and Leadership training residency?

At MAPLE I feel seen in my highest aspiration and supported to embody it. Before coming here I held back from fully giving my life energy to any pursuit while I searched for a way to truly live my vow. When I participated in an AI research retreat MAPLE held, I clearly saw that the work we did—research and engagement inseparable from spiritual practice—was living my vow. It was obvious to join MAPLE as it's the only place doing this work as far as I can tell, the deepest community of practice I've encountered, and I want to become more like the people here, who are the most impressive and admirable people I've ever met.

How have you benefited from your time at MAPLE?

Although I had been learning to meditate for years, when I first visited MAPLE I finally met Buddhism. Suddenly this path made much more sense and was brought to life. I realized I could really walk this path, which is all I truly wanted to do. Here I get to really focus on practice and center it in life. The joy and relief of doing that puts me in awe every day.

What has been your biggest challenge here?

My main challenge before I lived here was to keep up formal practice on my own at home. As a resident, because this container is so rigorous and it's relatively easy to just flow with the schedule even if there's resistance, my challenge has been to not just go through the motions of it, but to really embrace it without holding back.

What are your goals? What are you looking forward to here or beyond your time at MAPLE?

I aspire to hold both deep spiritual wisdom and scientific knowledge, to evolve these two traditions together for the transformative benefit of the world, and to learn something actually new about the nature of things. I'm looking forward to supporting this community to take the next steps towards actualizing our mission, and I hope we more than double in size and impact in the next year!

Yeshe grew up in San Francisco during the "dot com boom" with diverse passions. In high school she did field work and research in paleontology, and was inspired to discover the nature of things as a scientist. She studied computer science, math, physics, and philosophy of mind at Brown University and UW-Madison before working as a machine learning and data scientist at startups and large corporations.

Seeking deeper purpose and the depths of human authenticity and connection, she trained in Circling, transformational recovery coaching, and psychedelic integration. She struggled in her own life to find real ways to change habits at every level, all along asking 'why?' Finally Yeshe learned that meditation offered a path that addressed all of this and committed herself to this path.



STEWARD SPOTLIGHT: PROFILE ON **LHAGSAM WOHLERS**

INTERVIEW WITH LHAGSAM:

Why did you join the MAPLE stewardship Program?

For years, I had been looking for something meaningful to do, something that I could contribute to solving our global crisis. However, again and again in my efforts I realized “That’s not enough”, or “That doesn’t really address the deeper causes”. A few years ago I started my spiritual path with regular meditation and I realized more and more that the solution to our problems is deeply connected to spiritual work. MAPLE seemed to me to be a very interesting approach, based on a profound spiritual practice, to use this and bring it out into the world.

How have you benefited from your time at MAPLE?

I was clearly shown my limits even before the first retreat here began, not because anyone here was mean to me, but rather because the structures here are, in my opinion, aimed at pushing you to your limits again and again in order to develop yourself further. In addition, this is the first time I’ve really had an environment that teaches me to maintain my “practice” constantly, something I didn’t know before. However, I can probably only say how much of a difference it has made to my behavior once I have been back in my environment back home for a while.

What has been your biggest challenge here?

Definitely the exhortations from Soryu during the retreats. I was already aware beforehand that it would be exhausting and challenging, but I had no idea how high the intensity could be here. At some moments I felt completely overwhelmed, but after a few days, especially thanks to the great community here and Soryu’s support during the interviews, I was able to find my balance again.

What are your goals? What are you looking forward to here or beyond your time at MAPLE?

I definitely want to continue on a path that contributes to solving our global crisis and that benefits all living beings. I don’t yet know exactly where or what the next stop will be in this regard.

Lhagsam grew up in the countryside in a small village in northern Germany. His parents had long been active in the environmental and education sector, and taking part in demonstrations or listening to evening discussions on how things could be improved were among his early childhood memories. After high school, he trained as a carpenter in a therapeutic facility for people with mental illness and was involved in various refugee aid projects. At the age of 24, after a one-year backpacking trip, he began studying entrepreneurship in Germany with the aim of developing products and/or services that contribute to solving our global problems.



FINANCIALS



As the Center for Mindful Learning incubates its vision for a new system of education, its financial circumstances reflect the maturity and the relationships necessary to meet the challenges of its role.

Our income for the quarter was \$315,254, twice the figure for Q2 2023. As expected, guest income is down relative to last year. We decided to reduce our non-meditation programming, which has enabled us to deepen our focus on the Buddhadharma and devote our energy and resources to new projects. This decrease has been offset by increased contributions from donors large and small, including two large grants that have put CML in the black year-to-date.

Our expenses for the quarter were above average at \$144,753. The increase is, in part, accounted for by IT spending associated with ramping up our Online Monastery and Media team. Besides personnel, our largest single expense for the quarter was the renewal of our auto insurance policy in which we added a new vehicle that was generously donated to us earlier this year.

With regard to liabilities, CML continues to pay down its debt. It currently stands at \$1,010,378, including \$760,377 remaining on our Economic Injury Disaster loan from the SBA at a 2.75% interest rate and \$250,000 left on our mortgage at 0% interest. With the building season underway, we have invested \$34,407 into our property this quarter. Of this, \$28,901 was spent to complete the purchase of a 20 ft. yurt kit that will become our newest Zendo. We held the groundbreaking ceremony for this exciting new project at the end of June.

As ever, we are honored to find in the support of our donors a clear message that the work we are doing is truly what the world most needs at this time. This has been one of CML's most profitable quarters, and it was made possible by significant contributions by donors who made good on their pledges. And yet our work continues to grow in scope and significance. With plans to offer education on new platforms to new kinds of beings, to expand its facilities to support its world-class training, and to provide leaders in emerging fields of power with a direct experience of wisdom and compassion, we ask for your continued support as this path unfolds before us.

CML 2024 YEAR-TO-DATE

GUEST INCOME	DONATIONS & GRANTS	TOTAL INCOME*	TOTAL EXPENSES
\$39,022	\$329,927	\$397,734	\$274,781

*This includes more income than the types listed.

Figures listed are the combined financials of CEDAR, MAPLE, and OAK.

INVESTMENTS AND DEBT

TOTAL DEBT	YEAR-TO-DATE CAPEX**
\$1,010,378	\$89,947

**Large asset purchases & investments (CAPEX) are not included in annual operating expenses listed above but depreciated over many years.



MONASTIC ACADEMY

2024
SUMMER
QUARTERLY
REPORT

POETRY & PHOTOS

Relinquish it all
Deep inside there is a seed
Now. It is sacred

Sierra



Like a fresh mountain spring
Coursing through my sinews
I am breathed clean

Sei



The breath permeates the whole body
A breath unhindered and spontaneous
Folds the towels and mops the floors
As would a breath hindered and controlled

What kind of world do you want to live in?

Dan

What is the sound
Of stars
Dissolving into dawn
The sound of a moon
Drifting
In morning's light?

- Namgyal



FUTURE EVENTS

August 9 - 11

Awakening Weekend led by Renshin

August 16 - 18

Awakening Weekend led by Renshin

August 23 - 25

Awakening Weekend led by Renshin

August 30 - September 1

Awakening Weekend led by Renshin

Dates TBD

Soryu on west coast speaking tour

All events are subject to change or cancellation.

JOIN US

If you are interested in our events please don't hesitate to reserve a spot.

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

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SUMMER
QUARTERLY
REPORT