

Sangha Life



The Missouri Zen Center

December, 2005-January, 2006

The Missouri Zen Center

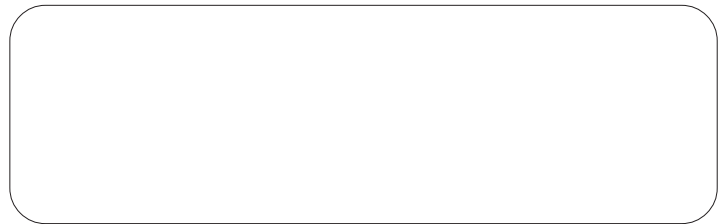
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Coming Events

- Ongoing: ICAN! Food Drive
- Dec. 21: Rosan returns to St. Louis
- Dec. 31: deadline for Dharma Life prison issue submissions
- Dec. 31: New Year's Eve sitting (tentative)
- Jan. 5: MZC Board of Directors meeting
- Jan. 8: Rosan leaves for Japan



*Address Correction
Requested*

Visit Our Web Site:
www.missourizencenter.org

Rosan in St. Louis for Holidays

We extend a warm welcome to our teacher Rosan as he arrives in St. Louis on December 21 for the end of the year holidays. He will be here through January 7 and will return to Japan on January 8.

New Year's Eve Special Event

On New Years Eve the Zen Center usually offers a special sitting beginning at 9pm with 40 minutes of zazen followed by 10 minutes of kinhin. Zazen and kinhin continue until just before midnight, when the bell is rung 108 times to mark the changing of the year. Following the bell-ringing there is a potluck vegetarian supper. In this way we can begin the New Year with a peaceful mind and heart (and a full stomach).

This year New Year's Eve falls on a Saturday evening, a time when the Zen Center does not have a scheduled sitting. We are looking for someone to be doan for this special event in order for it to take place. Anyone who is willing to do this, please contact Kuryo through the Zen Center. If the event takes place, there will be no sitting on New Year's Day (Sunday). The regular sitting schedule will resume on January 2.

Once it is determined whether or not the special sitting will take place, an announcement will be posted to the Zen Center listserv and also placed on the closet door at the Zen Center.

MZC Board Meeting Jan. 5

The next meeting of the MZC Board of Directors will take place on Thursday, January 5 following the evening sitting. Everyone is welcome to attend. Anyone who wishes to propose an event, suggest an income-producing opportunity, or have an idea for the Zen Center should attend the Board meeting and present such. If this is not possible, please submit your idea to Kuryo and she will put it on the agenda.

Possible Sesshin in January

Among other tasks, the MZC Board schedules events for the Zen Center. One possibility is a weekend sesshin in the second half of January. Please watch the listserv for a posting should this be scheduled.

Prison is Not Just Behind Bars: Dharma Life Prison Edition

Kalen is putting together a special issue of Dharma Life titled *Prison*. She writes: "The Buddha teaches us the path to liberation, but it is not an external liberation from the circumstances of the world. Prison doesn't have to be behind bars. In what ways do we imprison ourselves? In what ways can we liberate ourselves by changing our minds?"

Please send submissions addressing these themes to:

Kalen's Prison Booklet
Inside Dharma
Box 220721
Kirkwood, MO 63122

Submissions are due by December 31.

Food Drive Continues

The I-CAN food drive organized by Faith Beyond Walls continues. Food banks normally have a hard time meeting the needs of their agencies. The combined effects of Hurricane Katrina and the onset of winter and the end of the year holiday season are increasing the need for food donations. At the same time the Boy Scouts' Scouting for Food drive in November took in less food this year than last, perhaps due to the increase in gasoline prices and Katrina stretching families' charitable giving to its limits. Thus the need is greater than ever.

Missouri Zen Center is continuing to serve as one of the collection points for Faith Beyond Walls' <www.faithbeyondwalls.org> second annual I-CAN (Interfaith Congregations and Neighborhoods) food drive. Your donations go to St. Louis Area Food Bank which distributes food to food pantries in 14 Missouri and 12 Illinois counties, about an 80 mile radius around the city of St. Louis. St. Louis Area Food Bank providers distribute food to 43,580 people weekly in the St. Louis area. A great many of the people receiving food work full time at minimum wage jobs. The food distribution allows them and their families to eat until the next pay day.

The red Food Bank barrel has been moved inside the Zen Center for the winter, next to the book display. Please donate canned soups, canned fruits, canned vegetables, canned meats, baby formula, rice, beans, hot or cold cereal, peanut butter, boxed macaroni and cheese, dry milk, and other non-perishable foods. When we fill the barrel Food Bank will collect it and replace it with another empty one. The food drive will continue through February.

Breaking Out of the Prison of Technology

by Kuryo

Have you considered the possibility that technology imprisons us? This is not our usual cultural attitude toward technology. Perhaps you, like me, grew up hearing that each new technological "advance" would solve critical problems, improving the quality of our lives. As a person in training to become a chemist, and then a practicing chemist in industry, I could hardly avoid such talk. It seemed that the continuing existence of the company I worked for, and thus my livelihood, depended on continuing technological breakthroughs. I struggled with this while I was still employed with the company. Sometimes I believed it, other times I wondered if I might be missing something—especially on those sunny spring days I had to spend cooped up in a laboratory.



Now, in practicing zazen, a quiet room is suitable.

Eric Brende also grew up on the cultural belief that technological advances would cure all ills, and he believed it for awhile, too. But he became skeptical at a younger age than I did. While he was still in college, he researched the unhealthy effects of the sedentary life made possible by automation. What he learned led him to MIT's masters degree program in Science, Technology, and Society to wrestle further with the technology problem. Brende was not interested in eliminating all technology but rather in determining how much of it was enough: enough to avoid the most backbreaking physical labor but not so much as to rob us of quality of life through the demands of the machinery itself. To own a machine requires, first, earning the money to pay for it, then expending further money and time in learning to use it, fueling it, actually using it, maintaining and repairing it, storing it, and finally getting rid of it once its usable life is over. Brende wanted to know at what point we no longer own the machines but, rather, they own us. His query led him and his wife Mary to a community of people somewhere in the Midwest who lived without any electricity and without any motorized equipment. By comparing his previous life to life in the community, he hoped to discover how much technology is enough.

Brende's book *Better Off: Flipping the Switch on Technology* describes the life he and Mary led in this community for 18 months and what they learned about how much technology is enough. During that time they learned to farm by horsepower and sold some of what they grew for an income, stored food without refrigeration, used kerosene lamps for light, cooked with a kerosene or wood stove and heated with a wood stove, mowed the lawn with a push-powered reel mower, caught rainwater for washing and bathing and got drinking water from a nearby spring, washed clothes in a hand-powered machine, walked, bicycled, or used a horse and buggy for transport, and lived without a telephone. Most of us, seeing this list, would think that the Brendes had no time for anything else but keeping themselves alive. To the contrary, however, the Brendes found they had more time living in this way than they'd had when surrounded by all manner of everyday machinery. The community members showed them how to apply human brainpower to simplify acts like planting and raising pumpkins and mowing the lawn. The Brendes

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Letter to the Sangha from the MZC Board of Directors

Dharma Brothers and Sisters,

At the end of the year many of us take time to reflect on the previous year and consider efforts to make in the year to come. The following is one such reflection from the Missouri Zen Center's Board of Directors regarding our Zen Center.

Many of you have noticed the work that has been done on both the zendo and the gardens during the year, due to the need to fulfill the requirements of the Zen Center's conditional use permit issued a year ago. Our gardens continue to increase in both coverage and beauty. One of our members was hired to repair the pond, and we have enjoyed viewing the new pond and listening to the waterfall since last July. Many members have worked to expand the gardens and to keep them weeded, and also to keep the lawn mowed and raked. Our gardens show great promise of growing even more beautiful with continued loving care by our sangha.

Much work has been done on the zendo and the garage as well. While the plumbing and electrical work is not readily noticeable, it is significant nonetheless, increasing safety for all of us. The new windows make it easier to keep the zendo cool in the summer and reduce drafts in the winter. The garage has been painted and the missing windowpane replaced. We are attending to one last item needed for the occupancy permit and expect to receive the permit in 2006. Upon its receipt all requirements for the conditional use permit will be fulfilled.

As in past years, the sangha has worked together to keep the Zen Center in operation. Our two major fundraisers drew many volunteers. While the Hosta Sale performed somewhat under our expectations for it, the Japanese Festival food booth broke both gross sales and net profit records, aided by perfect weather and the strong publicity of the Missouri Botanical Garden for the sumo wrestling exhibitions. We are considering ways to revitalize the Hosta Sale and will share our thoughts with you as work begins for the 2006 Hosta Sale.

Inside Dharma, a project to bring Buddhism to Missouri state prisons, continues to support Buddhist practitioners in prison and upon their release. Inside Dharma volunteers found housing for several more people released in 2005, and the sangha helped to furnish their apartments and offered other support. One sangha member started a documentary interviewing people recently released from prison that can be used in a number of ways to support them as they transition back into life "outside". The Inside Dharma newsletter continues to be distributed to prisoners who request it, and an issue of Dharma Life exploring the prisons we make for ourselves is being prepared for printing in 2006. Inside Dharma is building a website as well.

The Zen Center continues to offer two periods of zazen, morning and evening, Monday through Friday; a 40 minute sitting followed by a special family sitting (children of all ages welcome!) on Saturday morning; and the extended period of practice on Sunday morning including three periods of zazen interspersed with a chanting service and kinhin, plus teisho, samu, and tea and discussion. This level of commitment among a sangha of the small size of ours is quite remarkable. Thank you to everyone who acts as doan and who joins in zazen periods. Each such act reduces suffering for all beings.

Special events at the Zen Center in 2005 included reinstitution of the writing group meeting on Monday evenings following sitting; publication of a special issue of Dharma Life titled The Dharma of Simplicity; visits by other teachers including Seido Ronci; participation in Vesak Day, Change Your Mind Day, and Mindfulness Day, activities sponsored by the Buddhist Council of Greater St. Louis to which the Zen Center belongs; acting as a drop-off site for the I-CAN food drive sponsored by Faith Beyond Walls; holding a day-long sesshin in July and a day and a half sesshin in September; offering a Beginners Mind class series in September and October; a workshop on the Your Money or Your Life program held in October; and a special guest speaker, Gerald Iversen from Alternatives for Simple Living, speaking about voluntary simplicity in late October. In September Karo took lay ordination. A number of other members are preparing for lay ordination in 2006.

Many people continue to perform tasks, visible or less so, to maintain our sangha as a practice place and thus offer the Dharma to all. We thank all of you for all of your efforts. We also thank all of you who support the Zen Center financially, through member dues and special gifts. Dues and gifts are a significant source of income to the Center.

At the end of the year we express our continuing gratitude for your contributions to the Zen Center in all their forms. If you are in a position to make an extra financial contribution to the Zen Center at this time, your contribution will be gratefully appreciated and used! We also appreciate your help in maintaining the Zen Center in many other ways and encourage you to continue your efforts in 2006. In this way we may devote ourselves to the three pillars of our practice ñ zazen, voluntary simplicity, and the Global Ethic.

May all beings enjoy peace and true happiness in the upcoming year.

Live An Unconditioned Life

by Rosan Daido

Humans live the most conditioned lives, creating complicated and conflicted consequences. They are conditioned by symbols of selves, societies, statuses and species, thereby becoming deluded and demised. There is a direct way of stopping this. Sit and thereby stop all karmas, past and present, physical, verbal and mental, and stay in unconditioned peace (nirvana) and unsurpassable awakening.

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found that community members were eager to offer assistance in learning to use horse-drawn machinery and in learning other useful skills, like canning food. The Brendes were gradually drawn into community-scale activities such as barn raising and threshing grains and, like other community members, readily lent a hand to other people needing a little assistance with farm and household work. Community members often used the phrase “many hands make work light.” Brende found that as people bent themselves to a task, conversation acted as an elixir to turn the work into an enjoyable act of self-forgetting. While getting useful work done, they enjoyed camaraderie and got exercise and fresh air—all at little or no cost.

You may be wondering how much this has to do with us and our life in the city. Most of us are not likely to shut off the electricity, get a horse and buggy, or grow much of our own food. The Brendes aren't doing this either. After their 18 months in the community ended and they had spent another two years in Boston at paid employment to save the money needed to buy a house, they moved to Hermann, Missouri for several years. During this time they added back particular forms of technology, looking for the balance point where the technology did not cost more than it was worth, and found ways to make money working for themselves. A couple of years ago, they moved to the McKinley Heights neighborhood of south St. Louis. They have electricity but use it sparingly. They have a small, highly energy efficient refrigerator. They don't have a TV or a home computer; they do have a telephone, they use a computer in the public library when necessary, and Eric has a cell phone for his rickshaw business. They work for themselves and stay out of debt. They mow with a push mower, grow a little food on their city lot, shop at Souard and at other local stores, and barter when and where they can for what they need. I can vouch for this approach: Meiku and I have also found that by limiting the technology we use that we have more time and enjoy our time more than when we were caught in the work-spend cycle. I recommend Brende's book both for its story and for the very engaging style of writing. Watch for Brende's occasional public talks if you want to know more. Perhaps his story will inspire you to try limiting some of the machines in your own life that are imprisoning you.



Zen Center E-mail List

All members and friends of the sangha are invited to subscribe to the Missouri Zen Center e-mail list. To subscribe, send an e-mail message from the address you wish to use for list messages to:

missourizencenter-subscribe@buddhistcouncil.us

The message field should remain blank.

You will receive a message asking you to confirm your subscription. Follow the directions in that message and your address will then be added to the list. If you encounter difficulties, consult the list owner at this address:

missourizencenter-owner@buddhistcouncil.us

Regular Zendo Schedule

Sunday

6:20-7:00 am	Zazen
7:00-7:20 am	Service (sutras)
7:20-8:00 am	Zazen
8:00-8:10 am	Kinhin
8:10-8:30 am	Zazen
8:30 am	Talk/discussion, work period, tea

You are welcome to come throughout the morning, but please do not enter the zendo during zazen. Enter quietly at other times.

Monday

6:00-6:40 am	Zazen
6:30-7:00 pm	Instruction
7:00-7:20 pm	Zazen
7:20-9:00 pm	Discussion/questions

Tuesday

6:00-6:40 am	Zazen
7:00-7:40 pm	Zazen
7:40-9:00 pm	Tea/discussion

Wednesday

6:00-6:40 am	Zazen
7:00-7:40 pm	Zazen
After sitting	Writing Practice

Thursday

6:00-6:40 am	Zazen
7:00-7:40 pm	Zazen

Friday

6:00-6:40 am	Zazen
7:00-7:40 pm	Zazen
After sitting	Dinner out

Saturday

8:00-8:40 am	Zazen
8:40-9:30 am	Discussion
10:00-10:30 am	Family Sitting

Work periods may be scheduled following zazen. Any changes to this schedule: please contact the Zen Center.

